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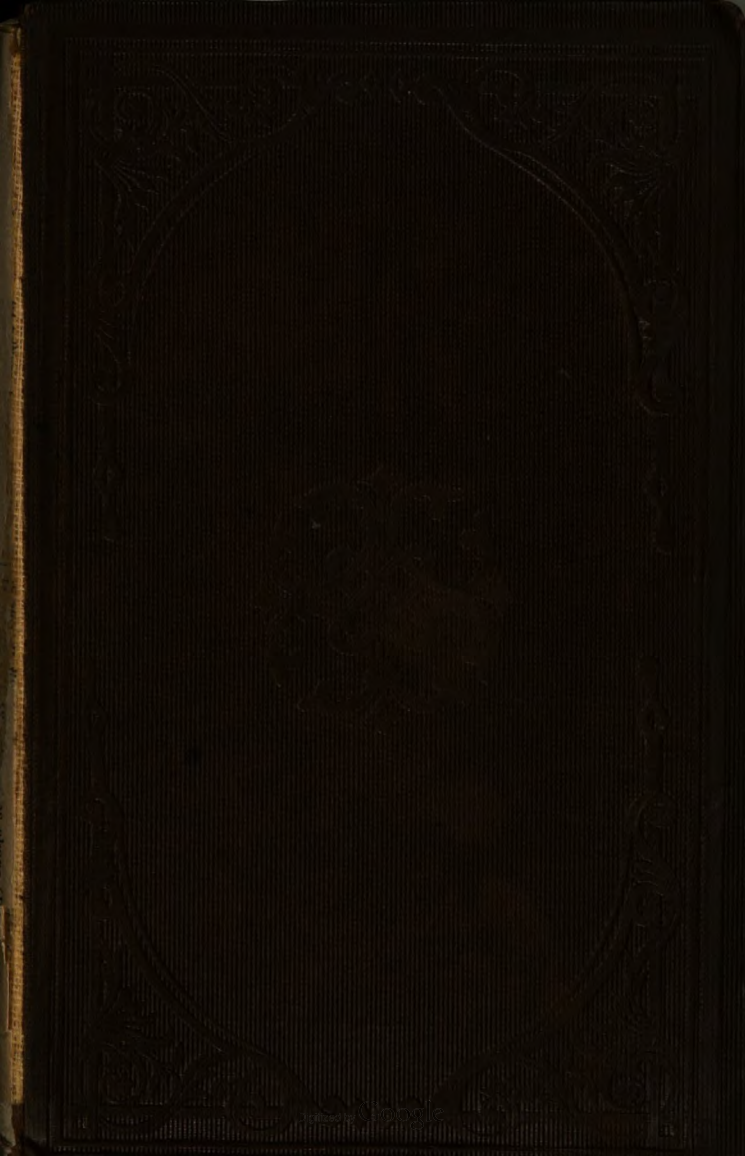
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THE SACRAMENT
OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER

Examined and Explained,

AND

THE DUTY OF CELEBRATING IT RECOMMENDED
AND ENFORCED.

BY THE

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CONTENTS.

PREFACE	Page ix
---------------	---------

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Object of the Work, and the Spirit in which we should enter upon it — The Lord's Supper considered as a Commemorative Ordinance— This illustrated by the Passover— This the View of the Church of England— A Declarative Ordinance— An Instructive Ordinance	1
--	---

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Lord's Supper considered as an Ordinance for feeding the soul, strengthening the faith, kindling the love, and animating the hope, of Believers; and thus uniting them more closely with Christ the head, and Believers the members, of His Church — This shewn to be the view of the Church of England — Also a kind of Typical Ordinance..	18
--	----

CHAPTER III.

THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF A FREQUENT
COMMUNION.

Frequency of Communion in the early Church —
 Dr. Cave — Calvin — For whom is this Ordinance
 intended? — The Duty of a frequent Communion
 shewn from the words of Christ, the Command of
 a King, the dying Request of a Friend, the Counsel
 of a Prophet and Priest, and also from the nature
 of the Ordinance itself Page 46

CHAPTER IV.

THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE SHOULD COME TO THE
LORD'S SUPPER.

The importance of this inquiry shewn — Jeremy
 Taylor quoted — We should come in a spirit of
 humiliation and of true repentance, with a stead-
 fast purpose to lead a godly life, a lively faith in
 God's mercy through Christ, a thankful remem-
 brance of His death, and be in charity with all men.
 — The necessity of this shewn in each case from *the*
nature of the ordinance itself to which we come —
 Scruples of sincere but timid Christians considered
 — Kettlewell quoted..... 63

CHAPTER V.

OBJECTIONS AND EXCUSES CONSIDERED AND
ANSWERED.

The Neglect of this Ordinance—Whence it proceeds
—Not from any Indifference upon the part of our
Church—This shewn—The real Cause of this
Neglect shewn—Various Objections and Excuses
considered and answered—An earnest Expostu-
lation addressed to Halters Page 90

CHAPTER VI.

“LET A MAN EXAMINE HIMSELF.”

Self-examination—The Object of it—Jeremy Taylor
quoted—The Neglect of it—The unspeakable Im-
portance of it shewn—Let a Man examine himself
as to his Knowledge of the Ordinance—As to the
Motives which bring him to the Lord’s Table—
As to whether he is in the State of Mind which we
have shewn to be necessary—Let him examine
himself by the Word of God—With Prayer for
God’s Spirit—The Blessings that would result from
such Self-examination 123

CHAPTER VII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE FAITHFUL
COMMUNICANT.

Special Seasons in which the faithful Communicant will find a peculiar blessing in this Ordinance — An aged Christian — How we should conduct ourselves after receiving the Holy Communion — The fall of all the Disciples, on the very night in which they received it, a warning to us — Their being received back again, an encouragement — Conclusion Page 141

PREFACE,

BY THE

REV. T. S. GRIMSHAWE, M.A.

THE substance of the following Treatise was delivered in the parish church of Biddenham, in the form of a series of Sermons, designed by the author, the Rev. BENJAMIN MATURIN, to elucidate the nature, privileges, and obligations connected with that hallowed and solemn rite, the Institution of the LORD'S SUPPER. These discourses, being so comprehensive and explanatory, excited much interest. They awakened inquiry where it had not previously existed, and in others tended to

deepen the views and holy affections which ought ever to be associated with the celebration of this sacred rite. Under these circumstances, the writer of this Preface suggested the propriety of adapting them to the press, for general circulation. It is true that many Treatises already exist on this subject, but it is too deeply connected with the high privileges and duties of the Christian, and presents too sublime and affecting a memorial of a Saviour's dying love, not to demand and merit the most extended inquiry. Knowledge is increased by multiplying the avenues that lead to its attainment. The minds of readers vary also in their character, and the quality of their inward experience; so that what is found not to be so well adapted to one state of mind may meet the wishes of another.

It is proper to state that the interpretation and views here brought forward are not those of a modern school. The Author ascribes no necessarily saving efficacy, like

the Church of Rome, to the administration of the rite itself; there is no inherent charm in it; its efficacy and beneficial effects depend on the frame of mind with which it is received, and the exercise of a true and living faith which apprehends the promised blessing. Such is the doctrine of our own Church, as expressly stated in her 25th, 28th, and 29th Articles; all other interpretations are to be rejected as unsound and unscriptural. It should always, however, be kept in mind, that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is more than a memorial. It is not only a memorial of the Redeemer's dying love, but a sensible and inward demonstration of it, where the frame of mind above specified is found to prevail. It is the mystical union and communion of our own spirit with the Spirit of Christ, whereby we become more closely identified with Him, as members of His mystical body, and are "one with Christ, and Christ one with us;" accompanied, on our parts, with a renewal of

our allegiance, a fresh surrender of the heart, and consecration of ourselves to the service of our Lord and Master. But we will not add more than an earnest prayer that the following Treatise may answer the object of its publication; and be instrumental in establishing sound views, and a corresponding holy walk with God, in all who read it.

T. S. GRIMSHAW.

Biddenham, December 1847.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Object of the Work, and the Spirit in which we should enter upon it — The Lord's Supper considered as a Commemorative Ordinance — This illustrated by the Passover — This the View of the Church of England — A Declarative Ordinance — An Instructive Ordinance.

“THIS do in remembrance of me.” How solemn the ordinance! how gracious the invitation! how precious the privilege! Christ himself at once the presiding host and the spiritual feast! His blood and passion the cost at which the banquet is provided! The invitation addressed by Him, the Son of God, to us, the sons of men, “Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.” (Prov. ix. 5.) Mingled for us; but,

B

ere he could present it to us, tasting himself of the vinegar mingled with gall. He, "the Son of God, became the son of man, that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God." He died that we might live; he loved us with a love stronger than death. "And to the end that we should alway remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which, by his precious bloodshedding, he hath obtained to us, he hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort."

It is, then, my Christian reader, to the consideration of an ordinance so solemn, so sacred, that I would now invite your attention—an ordinance in which the hungry have spiritual food, and the thirsty have drink; where the weak are strengthened, the wavering confirmed, and all the believing members of the mystical body of Jesus, "cemented, knit in one." are strengthened and refreshed, edified, and built up in their most holy faith.

Misunderstood by some, undervalued by others, and neglected, alas! by many, my

simple object and sincere desire in the writing of this little treatise, is, with God's blessing, to be of use to all. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."

Come, then ; the upper chamber is prepared, the table is spread, the Prince of Peace is seated, and we His people are privileged, with the disciples, to enter in, and there dwell in thought upon the import of this solemn ordinance, ere we approach to his table. "Cast off, then, thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." "Surely this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Oh, "blessed are they that dwell in thy house : they will be still praising thee." With such feelings as these, then, resting upon the soul, let us, in humble reliance upon the blessing of Almighty God, guided by His word, and looking for His Spirit, approach to the consideration of this solemn and sacred subject. Let us consider *the nature and design of this holy ordinance*.

Now it must be admitted, before we proceed further, that there is a degree of sacred mys-

tery thrown around this subject, which we are far from wishing altogether to remove—a degree of sacred mystery which bespeaks our reverence, but not our dread. Far, indeed, be it from us to apply to it those expressions which are made use of by some, such as “the awful majesty of its mystery,” “tremendous mystery;” but, upon the other hand, we would not blot from the sacred service of our communion that expression, “Holy mysteries;” a mystery which indeed bespeaks our reverence, but forbids us not, at the same time, to throw upon the subject the sacred light of Scripture. It is said of the great and mighty One that inhabiteth eternity, that “clouds and darkness are round about him,” and that “we cannot by searching find out the Almighty to perfection.” Still, we are not forbidden—nay, we are invited and commanded, to contemplate the character of the glorious God, in that revelation of his own will which it hath pleased him to bestow upon us. So it is with the subject before us. The word of God must be our guide; the word of God must set bounds to our inquiry. And as we are commanded “to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the

hope that is in us, with meekness and fear," so I do trust that it is in the spirit of meekness and of reverential fear that we now proceed to the consideration of

*The Nature and Design of the Ordinance of
the Lord's Supper.*

The Supper of the Lord was ordained, then, by Christ Himself ; and we have an account of its institution given in three of the Gospels—in Matthew, xxvi. ; Mark, xiv. ; and Luke, xxii. Now, we must carefully observe the time when, and the circumstances under which, this last Supper of the Lord was ordained. It was upon "the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, when they killed the Passover," and the object for which they were assembled was to eat the Passover. "The Master saith, *My time is at hand* ; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples." It was then, under such circumstances of solemn and affecting interest, that the first table of the Lord was spread ; upon the very night on which He was betrayed ; the first and the last time in which it was ever celebrated previous to the death of Him whose sorrows it was designed to shew forth. Thus the same table that was spread

for the Passover, became also the table of the Lord. From which account of its institution, as well as from other passages of Scripture, we may safely gather, that as the paschal lamb was a type of Him who is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" so, the passover itself was also a type of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In fact, the Passover was to the Jew under the Old, what the Lord's Supper is to the Christian under the New Testament dispensation. Here, then, in the nature and design of the Passover, we have a safe and scriptural illustration of what is, at least in some measure, the nature and design of the Lord's Supper. The Passover was commemorative; the Lord's Supper is commemorative. The Passover was designed to be in commemoration of a great deliverance effected for the Jew, at the same time that it was intended to serve as an illustration of the peculiar manner in which that deliverance was effected. The Lord's Supper was designed to be in commemoration of a great deliverance effected for the people of God, at the same time, that it was intended to serve as an illustration of the peculiar manner in which that deliverance was effected. Dwell upon this

illustration. Remember that the Jewish nation were bond-slaves in Egypt, afflicted under the oppressive hand of Pharaoh; the cry of the children of Israel, as they groaned under the stripes of their Egyptian hard task-masters, was heard in heaven by the God of their father Abraham. In which time Moses was raised up to be their deliverer. But no! the proud heart of Pharaoh is hardened; he will not let the people go. And now the arm of Jehovah is stretched forth, in all the dark terrors of his judgments, upon the land of Egypt. Blood, and frogs, and lice, murrain and hail, fire and thunder, locusts and darkness—even a darkness that might be felt; all the sore judgments of God are poured forth upon the land to humble the haughty heart of their proud oppressor, and to deliver his people. But no! the heart of Pharaoh is hardened; he will not let the people go. And now we come to that last and awful judgment upon the land, with which the ordinance of the Passover stands connected. The Lord reveals his purpose to Moses. “About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that

sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill ; and all the first-born of beasts." And now the Passover is instituted. "The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb ; a lamb for an house. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year ; ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats ; and ye shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month : and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the side-posts, and on the upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast ; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment : I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are ; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial ;

and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations : ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever." (Exodus, xii.) And now the paschal lamb is slain, the blood is sprinkled, and the midnight of the death-plague is come. How awful the scene ! A great cry is heard in Egypt ; the destroying angel has gone forth upon his deadly commission, and there is not a house in which there is not one dead. Turn, I beseech you, from this appalling scene to the land of Goshen ; mark the houses of the children of Israel that are sprinkled with the blood of the paschal lamb ; and, lo ! all within is life, safety, security, and peace. But how is this ? The blood is for a token upon the houses. When he sees the blood, he passes over the houses. His commission is, " Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further ;" and the plague is not upon them to destroy them ; for through this shedding of blood is remission. And oft as the children of Israel in future days, according to the commandment of the Lord, did keep the Passover, it was to them for a memorial ; they remembered that they were bond-slaves in Egypt, they thought upon the glorious deliverance, and they called to mind

the wondrous manner in which their deliverance was effected—how the Lord passed over the houses that were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb that was slain. And, no doubt, they would celebrate the Passover—the memorial of their great deliverance, with grateful hearts; and upon such an occasion would join in the song of Moses the servant of God: “He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” Thus we see that the Passover was a commemorative rite; that its design was to remind them of their slavery, and to remind them of their deliverance through the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb—how the Lord passed over the houses thus sprinkled. It was to them “for a memorial.”

How easy is the application of all this to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper! “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast.” Here, then, is the application by an inspired Apostle. Now, be it remembered, the Passover was commemorative; so is the Lord's Supper. The Passover was to the Jew a memorial of a great deliverance—the Lord's Supper is to the Christian a memorial of a greater. The Passover re-

mind the Jew of the peculiar manner in which his deliverance was effected—by the blood of a lamb slain sprinkled upon the door-posts. The Lord's Supper reminds the Christian of the peculiar manner in which his deliverance was effected—by the blood of the Lamb that was slain “from the foundation of the world;” at the same time that he is reminded that his heart must be sprinkled with the blood of this Lamb. In vain the blood, the lamb, if the door-posts were not sprinkled. In vain the cross, the sacrifice, if our hearts are not sprinkled from an evil conscience with the blood of Jesus. As often, then, as we approach to the table of the Lord, we are reminded that we were bond-slaves under the galling tyranny of the spiritual Pharaoh,—“the prince of the power of the air,”—the god of this world, that rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience,—his lawful captives—alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in us, because of the blindness of our hearts—under the condemning power of God's holy law, which denounces its curse against “every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them”—all

our lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death—having no hope, and without God in the world.

But the eternal Son of God, He became the Son of man; bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; He became “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;” and thus “tasted death for every man.” And to the end that we should always remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, He hath instituted and ordained these holy mysteries. As often, then, as I approach to this the table of the Lord, I dwell in thought upon all the mysterious scenes of his sorrows, which the mind of man can never fully comprehend. I contemplate the agonies of his soul in that awful night in which He was betrayed. 'Tis night! The disciples sleep for sorrow, but Gethsemane witnesses the agonies of the Lord;—I listen to the voice of his earnest supplication; I behold him bathed in sweat—great drops of blood bursting from his sacred person. Oh, how solemn! yet how simple the ordinance! Here the sorrows of the Saviour are made to pass before me;—the cross, and the bloody crown of thorns that

lacerated his sacred brow—the cry of agony wrung from his soul, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Oh,

“Did ere such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”

Surely, the contemplation of all this, brought before us in the solemn ordinance which He himself instituted, on the very night in which he was betrayed, is eminently calculated to awake within the soul feelings of the deepest moment. Christ is thus “evidently set forth crucified amongst us.” What was the effect of this spectacle on nature? Were not the heavens wrapped in blackness? was not the veil of the temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom? did not the earth quake? were not the hard rocks rent? and were not the still realms of death disordered? and shall man alone remain unmoved at the spectacle? No! the serious and prayerful contemplation of this subject in the solemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper is eminently calculated to cast a hallowing influence over the whole feelings of the soul. Thus we see that the Supper of the Lord was designed to be to us “for a memorial”—“This do in *re-*

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membrance of me." It is a commemorative rite—a kind of Christian remembrancer. And is not this view of the subject put forward prominently by our own beloved Church? Does she not in her Communion Service invite "all such as be religiously and devoutly disposed, to partake of the most comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, to be by them received in *remembrance* of his meritorious cross and passion?" And again, in the administration of the elements, does she not, through the mouth of her minister, thus address each communicant,—“Take and eat this, in *remembrance* that Christ died for thee; drink this, in *remembrance* that Christ's blood was shed for thee, and be thankful?" How simple in this respect the ordinance! Yet, oh! how solemn the train of feeling and of thought which it is thus calculated to awake within the soul!

But we pass on to observe, that as the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a commemorative, so it is also a declarative and instructive, ordinance. It is *declarative*; “for as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do shew the Lord's death till he come.” (1 Cor. xi. 26.) We do thus, by the silent and speech-

less eloquence of this significant action, call upon all around us to the consideration of his death; and shew forth, as in a glass, an affecting picture of the sufferings of our Saviour. We shew His death, the manner and the nature of His death;—that “He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the Lord laid upon Him the iniquities of us all.” We shew our faith in His death; our full affiance and dependence upon the merits of His sacrifice; that we believe that “by His one oblation of Himself once offered, He made a full, perfect, and sufficient oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” We thus become witnesses for Jesus; and, as though Christ did beseech the world by us, we expostulate with them. “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.” It is an *instructive* ordinance, for the very simple fact of its existence among us forms a chain of evidence which connects the religion of our day with that of the Apostles in the days of our Saviour; and being a matter of fact, it can easily be traced back by the

light of history, through all the dark ages of intervening centuries, to the very days of our Lord, "the author of our faith." It is an instructive rite; for the "*bread*" instructs me that the bread that Christ will give is His flesh, "which He will give for the life of the world,"—that "bread which came down from heaven:" and that, as natural life must be supported by natural bread, so spiritual life must be supported by this spiritual and heavenly bread. The bread *broken*, reminds me that He was wounded and bruised. The bread *taken*, reminds me that the bread given by Christ will not profit, unless it is taken by us,—taken with the hand of faith. And the bread *eaten*, instructs me that I must feed on him in my heart by faith with thanksgiving. And so the wine, poured out and drunk, instructs me in a similar manner, that "whoso eateth His flesh, and drinketh His blood, hath eternal life; and that He will raise him up at the last day."

Thus far, then, we have been enabled, I trust, to see, that the solemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a commemorative ordinance; the design of which is to remind me of *His death* and *my deliverance* through that death: a declarative ordinance, by the which I am

enabled, as in a glass, to shew, or hold forth to the world, an affecting picture of the death and sufferings of my Master, its manner and its nature : and an instructive ordinance, by the which I am, as by word and deed, instructed in the peculiar verities of our most holy faith.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF THE LORD'S
SUPPER.

The Lord's Supper considered as an Ordinance for feeding the soul, strengthening the faith, kindling the love, and animating the hope, of Believers ; and thus uniting them more closely with Christ the head, and Believers the members, of his Church — This shewn to be the view of the Church of England — Also a kind of Typical Ordinance.

AND now we proceed to consider the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in another, and that too a most important, point of view.

We proceed to shew that the Lord's Supper is not merely "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," but also that it is "a *means* whereby we receive grace, and a *pledge* to assure us thereof." A means whereby our union with Christ, the head and husband of his Church, is cemented, and our communion with our fellow Christians, the mem-

bers of His mystical body, is promoted. A means whereby we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood, and feed upon Him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving ; whereby faith, hope, and charity (or love) towards God and man, and all the graces that adorn the Christian character, are promoted, strengthened, and encouraged.

But here, before we proceed further, we are anxious to guard against a possible misapprehension, by distinctly stating that we look upon the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, not as a *depository*, but as a means of grace. It is, as defined in the Catechism of our Church, "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, *as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge* to assure us thereof." "Sacraments" (says the "judicious Hooker,"* in his "Ecclesiastical Polity"), "Sacraments are necessary, and the manner of their necessity to life supernatural is not in all respects as food unto natural life, because they contain in themselves no vital force of efficacy ; they are not physical but moral instruments of salva-

* Fol. ed. book v. p. 273.

tion; duties of service and worship, which, unless we perform as the Author of grace requireth, they are unprofitable: for all receive not the grace of God which receive the Sacraments of his grace. Sacraments serve as the instruments of God to that end and purpose—moral instruments—the use whereof is in our own hands, the effect in his: for the use, we have his express commandment; for the effect, his *conditional promise*: so that, without our obedience to the one, there is of the other no apparent assurance.”

But while, upon the one hand, we would not unduly elevate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper into a position which Scripture never intended it to occupy, and which the Church herself declines for it, far be it from us, upon the other hand, to lead you to look upon this solemn ordinance as a mere matter of memorial, the design of which is merely to stir up the pure minds of Christians by way of remembrance: it performs, indeed, for him, when duly received, this most important office; but it does not stop here: No; it would lead him on to a higher degree of perfection. It is a blessed means of grace, whereby union with Christ, the head and the husband of His

Church, and communion with the members of His mystical body, is cemented and promoted.

Now, in entering upon this branch of the subject, it will hardly be needful that I remind you that Scripture every where leads us to believe that there is a union,—close, intimate, and endearing,—subsisting between Christ and his Church, and the members in particular. This union is stated, implied, and illustrated; and various are the figures which Scripture makes use of to shew us the reality of this endearingly intimate, but mysterious, union. Christ is called the head; we, the members. Christ the vine; we, the branches. Christ the husband, who loved the Church and gave Himself for it; and we, the Lamb's wife, the spouse whom He loved, "that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." "This," exclaims the Apostle, after speaking of the union, "is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and His Church"—a union so intimate that the life of the members depends entirely upon the life of the head: "Because He liveth, we live also." "Our life is hid with Christ in God." True; but the Christian is called to the active exercise of this life, amid the scenes

and the sorrows, the trials and the temptations, of the cold and uncongenial atmosphere of this present world: it is to him a spiritual wilderness, in which there is no food to sustain and to support his spiritual life; but it has graciously pleased the great Head of the Church to open to him "rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys." There is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; Christ Himself is that fountain, and "except we eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, we have no life in us;" but, then, we must draw from this fountain through the means of those streams that make glad the city of God, one of the largest and deepest of which is the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper. It is the privilege of the faithful communicant, with a true, penitent heart, and lively faith, to draw near to this ordinance, and thus to refresh himself when he is weary; to draw out of the fulness that is in Christ "grace for grace,"—spiritually to eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood. Christ is really and truly present in this ordinance—present, be it observed, not in a bodily, but in a spiritual sense—present, not to vision, but to faith—present, not to the wicked, but to

the faithful communicant. "The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith" (saith the Twenty-ninth Article of our Church), "although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ; but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing." But if, with a true, penitent heart, and lively faith, we receive that holy Sacrament, then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood; we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we are one with Christ and Christ is one with us: for thus it is written, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. x. 16.) Well, therefore, may the true and faithful communicant join in the prayer of our Communion Service: "Grant us, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink His blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body, and our souls washed through His most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him and He in us." And well may he, after he has been made a

partaker of these holy mysteries, join in that ascription of praise, "Almighty and ever-living God, we most heartily thank thee, for that thou dost vouchsafe to feed us, who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Thus we see that our life, which is "hid with Christ in God," but which we are called upon to exercise in the cold and exhausting atmosphere of this present world, receives in this, the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper, new supplies of grace and of spiritual food, suited to the nature of its spiritual capacities and wants. We wish you not for a moment to look upon the Lord's Supper as the *only* means of grace which Christ hath instituted. Far otherwise, indeed; but this we say, that it is a most important means, which no Christian can neglect without injury to his own soul.

But if you ask from us a further explanation as to the manner and the nature of this spiritual union betwixt Christ and His Church; if you demand from us an explanation as to how it is that we are thus "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones,"

though we can point you to the means and the instrument by which this union is effected and promoted, yet, with regard to spiritual union itself, we can only say, in the language of the Apostle, "This is a great mystery." Or if, again, when we tell you that this spiritual life is nourished by spiritually feeding, in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, upon the body and blood of Christ; if you then exclaim with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" we can only say again, that we undertake not fully to fathom or explain the mysterious operations of that eternal Spirit of God, which, in and through this sacred ordinance, worketh in the hearts of his people "as he listeth." But sure am I, that the humble-minded and faithful communicant, who, in the use of this sacred means, hath "tasted that the Lord is gracious," will, instead of scrutinising and prying too deeply into the operations of the Eternal Spirit of God, who worketh in the hearts of his people as mysteriously as the wind that bloweth, sure am I, I say, that the humble and faithful communicant will prize the ordinance, value its blessings, and "feed therein on Christ in his heart by faith with thanksgiving."

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Beware, oh, beware, in spiritual matters, of disputing instead of believing !

Thus we see spiritual life requires spiritual food ; this spiritual food is afforded in the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Is it not, therefore, a blessed means of sustaining and promoting the life of the believer, which is hid with Christ in God ?

But we advance to shew that, not only is there in this sacred ordinance *food* to sustain the life of the believer, but also *fuel* to fan and to kindle the holy affections of his soul, and therefore to draw him within the sphere of a more intimate and endearing union with Christ his glorious head. Now we must here observe, that faith is the means which connects the believer with Christ : "The life," saith the Apostle, "that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Faith, then, is the silver cord which binds together Christ, the glorious head and husband of his Church, with that Church whom He loved and for whom He gave Himself. But this faith is not a mere cold, speculative assent of the head to the truth of our religion, such as devils may possess while they tremble ; no, it is a matter of the heart—"with the heart man believeth

unto righteousness"—which stands in close and intimate connexion with the other kindred affections of the soul,—hope and charity (or love); so much so, that if faith be without them "it profiteth nothing," and the more hope and love are animated and kindled, so much the more a great deal will it be found that faith itself is nerved, increased, and strengthened. Now, we want to shew that there is a something in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper which is eminently calculated to kindle the love, to increase the faith, and to animate the hope, of the believer; and if we can shew this, you will then understand how it is that the Lord's Supper is a blessed means of cementing the union that exists betwixt Christ and his Church by strengthening faith, the bond of that union, and by kindling and animating those other graces of love and of hope, which may be called the handmaids or the twin-sisters of faith.

Now, let us begin with faith,—faith toward God. Faith is that which gives substance to things hoped for, evidence to things not seen; faith is the arm by the which the spouse, as she cometh up from the wilderness, leaneth upon her Beloved,—the hand

by which the believer grasps and lays hold upon the finished work of Jesus, and clings to his cross. Without faith no union with Jesus ; “ without faith it is impossible to please God ; ” without faith there can be no love, no hope : there may, indeed, be a fear of his wrath, a dread of his vengeance, and a consequent shrinking away from his presence ; but, assuredly, without faith there will be no love ; but wherever there is true faith it will be accompanied and followed by love, as it will be preceded and accompanied by repentance.

But faith is a thing that groweth : “ Lord, increase our faith.” And amongst all the means and ordinances which the Lord hath instituted for the increase of our faith, perhaps the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, when duly received, is the most effectual. The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper prepares the way for the increase of our faith, by deepening our humiliation and repentance ; for there it is that we obtain the most appalling manifestations of God’s hatred of sin, “ that He spared not his beloved Son,” when He stood in the room of sinners, but gave to the sword of justice its commission,—“ Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my

fellow, saith the Lord of hosts : smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." (Zechariah, xiii. 7.)

Oh, surely the serious and frequent contemplation of this, in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, is eminently calculated to deepen our humiliation and repentance, by presenting sin before us as "exceeding sinful," and thus to prepare the way for the exercise of faith ; for the same ordinance which presents us with the terrors of God against sin, points to the provision of God for the *pardon* of sin : and thus we are invited to "draw near with faith." We come, it may be, with trembling, like the woman in the Gospel ; we sit behind him at his feet weeping : but here it is that the Saviour meets us in the accents of encouragement,—“ Son (or daughter), thy sins be forgiven thee : thy faith (though weak) hath saved thee : ” my work is perfect, my sacrifice sufficient. Here it is that he presents us with the pledges of his love, by the which he doth “ assure us of his favour and goodness ; ” and if there be still any lingering unbelief in the heart, as to whether His love and work reach to the depths of my case, surely it will give way when I am thus addressed : “ The body of

our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for *thee*." For thee! "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

Nor is this all; faith is strengthened by exercise; for as the arm of the human body is nerved, braced, and strengthened by frequent exercise, so faith—the arm that grasps and lays hold upon the finished work of Jesus—is increased and strengthened to active exercise. Now, in the Supper of the Lord, we have a field for the calling forth the principle of faith into action; for here it is that we renew again the vows of our baptismal covenant; here it is that the Christian soldier, after having endured many a hard-fought conflict, passes again in review beneath the banners of the great Captain of his salvation, and takes again the *oath* of his allegiance (for the word sacrament means oath); here it is that the spiritual spouse renews again to her glorious husband her vows of constancy and of love; here we present ourselves unto Him, soul, body, and spirit, as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice, and offer up our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; and yet, withal, we are taught to do it in a spirit so humble, confessing that we are not worthy, through our

manifold sins, to offer unto Him any sacrifice, that, by thus exercising ourselves in the Lord our God, we may expect that the faith of every one of us will "grow exceedingly."

And as repentance prepares the way for the exercise of faith, so faith makes ready a way for the outgoings of love. Now let us look at love; let us consider how it is the Lord's Supper is calculated to kindle our love. But love, love to God in the heart of man, whence came it? who hath planted it? how is it that a flower of so fair a growth, of so heavenly a fragrance, is found to bloom upon the desert soil of man's earthly heart? We answer, "This hath God done;" it is the planting of the Lord! "We love him because he first loved us." All man's love on earth to God in heaven is but the responsive echo to the voice of God's love to man: it is, in the language of Archbishop Leighton, but the "repercussion of the beams of God's love to us;" for "we love Him because He first loved us." And the more we are enabled to discover and to dwell upon the manifestations of God's love to us, the more it will be found that the affections of our hearts are drawn forth in the exercise of holy love toward God. Now, "God is love;" and the

manifestations of God's love are richly strewn around us, in all the wonders of creation, the ways of providence, and the daily blessings of His bounty. And all this has, or ought to have, a direct influence in winning the love of man's heart to God. And yet it does not produce this effect. And why is this? Is there not a cause? The cause is simple; it is this,—because, while we there behold manifestations of God's love, we at the same time feel that “He is a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;” and therefore, under the conscious pressure of unpardoned sin, we shrink back from the presence of our God. But when we turn to the contemplation of that still brighter manifestation of God's love to us in redemption's finished work, and behold Him then as a God of boundless love, we view Him at the same time as a God “that pardoneth iniquity, and passes by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage.” While, therefore, God commendeth His love toward us in sending “His only-begotten Son into the world to die for us,” He removes at the same time every hindrance to the outgoings of our love to Him; He removes the dread of His wrath: so that, instead of endeavouring to hide ourselves from

the presence of the Lord God, under the conscious fear of guilt, we are enabled to approach to Him as to our reconciled Father, and, with childlike confidence, with filial affection, to cry out, "Abba, Father!" But when, with a true, penitent heart, and lively faith, we approach to the solemn and sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper, we there behold, as in a glass, the most stupendous manifestations of His love. Christ is thus "evidently set forth crucified among us;" we behold, as it were, His body broken, and His blood shed; the most affecting emblems of His dying love,—a love which passeth knowledge, which brought Him from the bright realms of glory to the dark scenes of earth, to become for us "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,"—a love, the breadth, the length, the depth, the height of which we can never fully comprehend,—a love which rivets the admiring gaze, and wakes the enraptured song, of those bright cherubs of bliss that surround the throne of God; which shall form the endless theme of the adoring praise of "the spirits of just men made perfect." All this is brought before us in the solemn and affecting ordinance of the Lord's Supper; and, oh! shall it not

wake within us feelings of love to Him who thus "first loved us?" for surely

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands our heart, our life, our all."

Thus we see how that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, when duly received, is eminently calculated to increase our faith, to kindle our love. And here we might proceed to shew how it is calculated in a similar manner to animate the hope of the believer; but we forbear: enough, quite enough, we trust, has been already advanced to illustrate this branch of our subject. Indeed, if faith be increased, love kindled, in the use of this sacred ordinance, surely there is here a safe foundation upon which to build a well-grounded hope for eternity; besides that, when we thus "eat of His bread and drink of His wine," we are led forward in the anticipations of hope to the approaching period when we shall be privileged to sit down at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and drink the new wine with Him in the kingdom of God.

Christian reader, connect these considerations with the fact, that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a means whereby the Spirit of

God doth work in us, allaying our fears, removing our doubts, enlightening our minds, sanctifying our souls, filling us with all joy and peace in believing, by taking of the things of Christ and shewing them unto us, drawing us with the cords of love, and sealing us with the Holy Spirit of promise,—the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. Connect all this with the consideration, that in this holy ordinance our souls are fed, repentance deepened, faith increased, love kindled, and hope animated; and say, oh, say, is not the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, when duly received, a happy, holy means, of cementing that spiritually endearing, but, withal, mysterious union, that exists between Christ, the glorious head, and the believing members of his Church, the spouse whom He loved? Oh, surely, they that thus "wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

But we observed, that not only is this Sacrament of the Lord's Supper a means of cementing the union that exists betwixt Christ and his Church, but, also, that it is a means of

promoting and cementing that union and communion of kind, Christian fellowship, and of love, which *binds together the members* of the mystical body of Jesus. And oh, if it shall be found to produce an effect so happy, how blessed, how glorious the ordinance! For alas, alas! where is the gentle, heavenly spirit of Christian love which, in the first early days of pure Christianity, adorned and beautified the believing Church of Christ? when “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul;” and surrounding heathen were forced in admiring wonder to exclaim, “See how these Christians love one another!” But, alas! “how is the fine gold become dim!” how is the light of heavenly love obscured and darkened by the clouds and mists of man, that now seem to settle down upon the horizon of our day! Enmity and strife, ambition and discord, now divide the multitude; heresy and schism seem like grievous wolves, to have entered in among us, not sparing the flock, fleecing the old, devouring the young: meanwhile, the jarring discords of man, the clamours of party, and the strife of tongues, seem to have banished from amongst us, save in some favoured, hallowed spots, the gentle, heavenly spirit of

Christian love. From the noisy platform of earth she seems for the most part to have flitted, and upon the pinions of love to have winged her way upward to the throne of that glorious God who is "love." And yet, love—love to God and love to man,—yes, love to the brethren, is a necessary ingredient in the character of every one who would be a true disciple of Him who is the Prince of Peace; for, in the plain and striking language of the disciple whom Jesus loved, "If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." And again, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Profitless and vain are all acquisitions if the gentle spirit of Christian Charity, or love, grace them not with her presence: for "though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity [charity here means love], I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have

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not charity, it profiteth me nothing." But where or how shall we best cultivate and cherish this spirit of Christian love, that binds together the members of the mystical body of Jesus, and cements the living stones in that glorious temple of which Jesus Himself is the foundation stone? I answer, The means are manifold; but amongst them stands conspicuous the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper: for here it is, that, beholding the most stupendous manifestations of God's love to us, we are led to feel that "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Here it is that, meekly kneeling upon our knees together around the table of the Lord, we pour forth our united confessions, and mingle our voices together in the accents of prayer and of praise. Here it is that we acknowledge "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all;" and that "we, being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x. 17.) Here it is that we are led to anticipate that happy period when the strife of party shall cease, when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the

kid," and the reign of the Prince of Peace shall spread like a sea of glory from pole to pole. Here it is that we may expect the largest outpourings of that "unction from on high," to still and to calm the troubled waters of strife. Oh, holy, blessed ordinance, that shall produce an effect so happy! "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Ps. cxxxiii.) Thus, I trust that we have been led to see that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a blessed means of promoting that union and communion of Christian fellowship, and of love that binds together under one glorious Head the believing members of the mystical body of Jesus.

And now, let us look to the conclusion of the whole matter. How long is this ordinance to be continued? We have the answer to this question given us by the Apostle Paul, in the eleventh chapter of his First Epistle to the

Corinthians, and 26th verse ; and the answer is this : “ *Till He come.*” But may we not humbly ask, “Why till He come?” We answer, “Till He come,” who is the sum and substance of all that is shadowed forth to us in this sacred ordinance,—till He, the “Sun of righteousness, arise with healing in His wings;” for as the stars which God hath “set in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,” and to be “for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years,”—as the stars of night are chased away, and disappear before the rising beams of the morning sun, so when He, the Sun of righteousness, shall arise upon His Church, in all the splendour of His glory, then we shall no longer need the dim light of means and of ordinances. “The sun shall no more be (then) thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God, thy glory.” “Till He come,” the glorious husband of His Church, to address His beloved spouse in those cheering strains : “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away ; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone ; the flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice

of the turtle is heard in our land." "Till He come;" for then we shall no longer need the use of an ordinance which is *commemorative* in its nature: for "we shall see Him as He is," behold Him face to face, and be transformed into His blessed "image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Till He come;" for then we shall no longer need the use of a *declarative* ordinance: for we shall not have need to teach every man his brother, saying, "Know thou the Lord," for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest, and the reign of the Prince of Peace shall be from the flood, even unto the world's end. "Till He come;" for then we shall no longer need the use of an *instructive* ordinance: for "we shall be kings and priests unto our God, and shall reign with Him for ever and ever." "Till He come;" for then we shall no longer need the use of an ordinance, the design of which is *to unite us more closely to Jesus by feeding our souls*: "for we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and shall lead us unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes." "Till He come;" for then we shall

no longer need the use of an ordinance to *strengthen our faith, kindle our love, or animate our hope*: for then faith shall be lost in vision, hope shall set in the reality of everlasting enjoyment, and love itself shall have her perfect work. As one united, glorious family, needing no helps to devotion, no incentives to the love of God or of each other, we shall walk in His light, we shall live in His love, shall bask beneath the sunshine of the smile of an everlasting Father; and from our golden harps shall strike forth one united song of adoring, ceaseless praise to God and the Lamb, for ever and ever. Oh, happy, glorious period! Meanwhile, happy are they that wait upon the Lord in the use of this sacred ordinance—an ordinance which points us back to the first, and points forward to the second, coming of Jesus; which reminds us of the sufferings of Christ, but leads us to contemplate the glory that should follow,—an ordinance which, like the Passover itself, is at once commemorative and typical, pointing us back to our deliverance effected by the first coming and the sufferings of Jesus; leading us forward to the contemplation of the full enjoyment of our redemption, at

the second and glorious coming of Emmanuel. Oh, glorious ordinance ! Blessed are they that wait upon the Lord in the faithful use of it ! For here it is that, with the beloved John on the Lord's Day, we obtain visions of things that are, and of things that shall be hereafter. Here it is that, with the disciples, we are permitted to stand, as it were, upon the Mount of Transfiguration ; and while we thus become, as it were, " eye-witnesses of His majesty," we listen to the converse that speaks of His decease which He hath accomplished at Jerusalem. Here it is that, with Moses, we stand upon the top of Mount Pisgah, and obtain a view of the goodly land, gaze upon its green plains and everlasting hills, and are led to look for His kingdom and His coming.

And yet here is that presenting ourselves, soul, body, and spirit, " as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice " unto God, and receiving from Him the pledges of His dying love, by the which He doth assure us of His favour, we are enabled to feel and to reason with the wife of Manoah, " If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands ; neither would He have shewed us all these things, nor

would He as at this time have told us such things as these." (Judges, xiii. 23.) Thus, while we look and hope for the enjoyment of heaven, our hopes are fixed upon the one, full, and perfect sacrifice of Jesus; and the light that breaks upon the soul from heaven is blended with shadows that fall upon us from Calvary. Here the cross is connected with the crown—the sufferings of Jesus, with the glory that shall follow; and we, His believing people, are led forward in the anticipations of blessed hope to realise His kingdom and His coming, knowing that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

Thus have we endeavoured to open up to your minds the nature and the design of this Christian ordinance.

"Now, of the things which we have spoken this is the sum." We have here an ordinance which is commemorative, declarative, and instructive in its nature—an ordinance, the design of which is to feed our souls, to strengthen our faith, to kindle our love, to animate our hope; and thus to unite us more closely to Christ and to each other; at the same time that it is a kind of typical ordinance that points to His coming,

and shadows forth the blessings of His kingdom. Christian reader, how solemn, how sacred the ordinance, how blessed the privilege, to wait upon the Lord in the use of it ! How gracious the invitation of Jesus !

And now we turn to the consideration of the invitation itself, and the obligations we are under to accept of it. This must form the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF A FREQUENT
COMMUNION.

Frequency of Communion in the early Church —
Dr. Cave — Calvin — For whom is this Ordinance
intended? — The duty of a frequent Communion
shewn from the words of Christ, the Command of
a King, the dying Request of a Friend, the Counsel
of a Prophet and Priest, and also from the nature
of the Ordinance itself.

“ THIS do in remembrance of me.” Here,
then, is the gracious invitation sent forth by
the divine Saviour to all His believing people,
to come and “eat of His bread, and drink of
His wine.” The royal banquet is provided,
the table is spread, Jesus is seated, and here
is the proclamation of love sent forth to all
the “children of the heavenly king,” to come
in and “feed upon Him in their hearts by
faith with thanksgiving.”

How gracious the invitation ! how high, how blessed the privilege, thus to be permitted to sit down at the table of the Lord, and partake of that banquet which He hath provided for us at the cost of " His agony and bloody sweat, His precious death and burial ! " Alas, then, that we should have at all to press that in the light of an *obligation* which is, in truth, the highest and the dearest privilege of the children of God ! The parent has not thus to press upon the attention of his child the necessity of partaking of the provisions which he lays before him ; or if he has, it is only because he is not in the enjoyment of his wonted health : it is because his appetite is gone : so, is it not because men do not " hunger and thirst after righteousness," that they so often disregard the invitations of Jesus, or turn away from the table which He hath spread ? It was not so in the first early days of pure Christianity ; the Church of Christ had not then forgotten the ardour of her first love to her Saviour ; and whenever believers came together they commemorated the dying love of Jesus in this, His own ordinance, by the " breaking of bread." Yes, " they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fel-

lowship, and in breaking of bread and prayers." "For the persons communicating at this Sacrament," says Dr. Cave, in his "Primitive Christianity," "at first the *whole* Church, or body of Christians within such a space that had embraced the doctrine of the Gospel, and been baptized into the faith of Christ, used constantly to meet together at the Lord's Table." And again, "At first, when the spirit of Christianity was yet warm and vigorous, and the hearts of men passionately inflamed with the love of Christ, it is more than probable they communicated every day, or as oft as they came together for public worship; insomuch that the Canons Apostolical, and the synod of Antioch, threaten every one of the faithful with excommunication who came to church to hear the Holy Scriptures, but stayed not to participate of the Lord's Supper. This custom of receiving the Sacrament every day continued some considerable time in the Church, though in some places longer than others, especially in the Western Churches." "We ought always to provide," says Calvin, "that no meeting of the Church is held without the word, prayer, the dispensation of the Supper, and alms." We may gather from Paul that this was the order

of the Corinthians ; and it is certain that this was the practice many ages after : hence, by the ancient canons, which are attributed to Anacletus and Calixtus, “after the consecration was made, all were to communicate who did not wish to be without the pale of the Church.” Such, then, was the spirit in which the Church of Christ in early days received the invitation of her Lord, and such the ardour with which they were accustomed to commemorate the dying love of the Saviour ; communions as frequent as the days of their public worship, and all accustomed to come forward to the table of the Lord, save those who were of under age, or who had been excommunicated for their offences. “As for those,” says Dr. Cave, “who could not be present, either through distance of place, sickness, or any other just cause, the Eucharist was wont to be sent home to them.” But, alas ! looking at the state of things at the present day, may we not ask,

“Where is the blessedness she knew,
When first she saw the Lord ?”

How has the spirit of apathy and indifference crept over the members of the Church of Christ, chilling the ardour of their affection, and draw-

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ing them off from the constant commemoration of His dying love? The table of the Lord is spread, but the invitation, "Draw near with faith," is but the summons for the multitude to retire in unbelief: thus practically excommunicating themselves, declaring in deed, if not in word, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" turning their backs upon their Lord, rejecting His invitation, and pouring their cold contempt upon the most solemn and sacred ordinance of our most holy faith, procured for us at the price of the precious blood of Jesus. Oh, I cannot persuade myself but that, if men will consider this, it will, with the aid of the Divine blessing, awaken within them a better spirit, and stir them up to a more constant communion.

Come, then, let us consider the injunction of our Saviour, "This do in remembrance of me;" "Drink ye all of this." But here, before we proceed further, let us inquire, To whom were these words addressed? for whom is this ordinance intended? We answer, It is intended for the disciples, for the true disciples of Jesus, and for none but them; for true Christians alone. Indeed, the very nature of the ordinance itself will prove that it is de-

signed for those alone who know the Lord by faith; for it is a *commemorative* ordinance,—we are to do this in *remembrance* of Jesus. But how shall the wicked remember Him, whom they never knew? They know not God. It is an ordinance, the design of which is to feed our souls, increase our faith, and kindle our love; but how shall the souls of those who are “dead in trespasses and sins” be fed? or how shall faith be increased or love animated when they do not exist? No, to such we would say, It is quite in vain you come to the table of the Lord, if you will not come to the Lord Himself; you cannot be a partaker of its benefits: nay, rather, you eat and drink your own condemnation; you kindle God’s wrath, and provoke Him to plague you with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death. No, we would call upon you to repent you truly of your former sins, to amend your lives, and to flee to Jesus Himself from the wrath to come. Oh, we could tell you of tribulation, and anguish, and fiery indignation,—the portion of all that forget God: we could point you to the coming judgment of Jehovah, and thunder in your ears the terrors of Sinai; but we rather seek to win and woo you by the love of Jesus.

“ Christ died for the ungodly ; and God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us : ” “ He willeth not the death of a sinner,” but calls upon you, “ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, and He will abundantly pardon.” It is said that Jesus “ sat down with the twelve.” True it is there was amongst them a Judas, one who was a traitor, a thief, and a devil : but, oh, surely, if we consider his subsequent conduct and his awful end, there is no encouragement here for the wicked to come : nay, rather, it stands forth upon record as the most awful warning that they presume not to approach to this holy table. “ If any of you, therefore,” says the Exhortation in our Communion Service, “ be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of His word, an adulterer, or be in malice or envy, or in any other grievous crime, repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy table ; lest, after the taking of that holy Sacrament, the devil enter into you, as he entered into Judas, and fill you full of all iniquities, and bring you to destruction both of body and soul.” But to

all that truly and earnestly repent them of their sins—to all that are endeavouring to follow the Saviour, even though it may be like Peter, “afar off,”—to all that are fighting against sin, even though the heavy hands may hang down and the feeble knees may tremble—to all such as possess faith in Christ, even though it may be weak and wavering—to all such we would say, “To you is the word of His salvation sent.” “This do;” “draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon your knees.”

In this spirit, then, having fixed upon the persons to whom the words of Jesus are addressed, let us consider the words themselves,—“This do.” And here we have, in the first place, a *plain and positive command*, which there is no evading; the command, too, of Him who is a King, of King Jesus,—of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords; for “upon His head are many crowns,” and “of His kingdom there shall be no end.”

Acknowledge we then the royal character of Jesus? Profess we to submit ourselves to the authority of the King of Zion?

Yes, I trust we acknowledge Him to be Lord

and God, and that we are ready to exclaim, in the language of Nathaniel, " Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel ;" then give ear to the words of Israel's King, " Ye are my friends when you do whatsoever I command you ;" and this I command, " this do." How plain, how positive, the command ! And, oh, how solemn the circumstances under which it was delivered ! On the very night in which He was betrayed,—in the hour of His deepest humiliation and sorrow, when seemingly forsaken by man and neglected by God, He exclaimed, in the dark hour of His agony, " Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour ; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." Ah ! there may be many who are willing to acknowledge the authority of a king when he sits upon the throne, surrounded by every manifestation of royalty and of power ; but to obey in the hour of deepest distress, when forsaken by all, here is the true test of loyalty : and of such a nature, we perceive, is the command before us. How solemn ! how positive ! and of a character so peculiar, that it is binding alone upon those who acknowledge the authority of Jesus ; and, there-

fore, is the surer test of their fidelity. A man may be honest in his dealings and sober in his character, but then he is bound to be so by the laws of morality and of society, and it may be simply as a moral character that he is so, without any deference to the authority of Jesus. But in the command, "This do," Christ stands alone, morality or reason know nothing of it; it is binding alone upon the conscience of him who acknowledges the authority of Christ, and therefore is the surer test of his obedience. "This do;" a command of such import that, when the Apostle of the Gentiles received afterwards his commission from heaven to preach the Gospel, that it was expressly made known to him by revelation, and inserted in his commission; "for I have received," says he, "of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you: that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.'" Christian reader, how plain! how positive! how solemn the command! how peculiar its nature! how weighty its import! The man, therefore, who lives in the habitual neglect of

this ordinance, lives in a continual state of rebellion against the plain, solemn, peculiar, and weighty command of Him who is the King of Zion. And, oh, surely, if they escaped not who refused the invitation to the marriage feast,—if they who neglected the ordinance of the Passover (a type of the Lord's Supper) incurred the heavy displeasure of God, and were to be cut off from Israel (Exodus, xii. 19) —“of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall they be thought worthy” who, by the habitual neglect of this ordinance, tread under foot the Son of God, count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing, refuse the invitations of Jesus, and disobey His plain and positive command?

But may we not view the words of our Saviour in the light of a *dying request*?—the last dying request of Him who poured out His soul an offering for us, who died that we might live, and drank for us the bitter cup of human sorrow to its very dregs? And, oh, surely, when viewed in this light, it will fall with all the peculiar and touching weight of a constraining power upon the heart and conscience of all His people, redeemed by His blood, saved

by His power, and sanctified by His Spirit. For who is He who thus addresses us, "This do in remembrance of me?" Are not the words the last dying request of Him who is a friend indeed? "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," whose love for us passeth knowledge, who looked upon us in our low estate, who left for us the bright abodes of bliss to become "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" that thus He might lift us up from the death and the darkness of sin, and bring us back again to the light, the love, and the favour of God?

Oh, contemplate the wondrous manifestation of His love for us, remember the glories of His eternal Godhead, and then gaze upon the scenes of that sorrow which for us He endured; and say, shall not the words of the Saviour fall with constraining power upon the conscience of all those whose hearts have at all been touched with a sense of His wondrous love? Surely, it were an instance of the darkest and basest ingratitude to reject the last dying request of Him who loved us with a love so strong! A request, too, so small; for here He imposes upon us no expensive outlay, no weighty ceremonies, no weary pilgrimages,

but having freed us from all the cumbrous rites of Jewish observances, which, as St. Peter says, "neither they nor their fathers were able to bear" (Acts, xv. 10); he merely enjoins upon us the easy rites of Baptism and His Supper. "This do:" take bread, break and eat; take wine, pour out and drink; and "this do in remembrance of me,"—in remembrance of my love, my sufferings, my sorrows for thee. I present thee with these, the last pledges of my affection, the memorials of my dying love for thee; and I ask thee, now that we are about to part—I ask thee, as my last dying request, that you will thus cherish, when I am gone, a recollection and a sense of my love, till I come again to "receive thee to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Oh, I may summon up enough of sinful hardihood to disobey His command; I may refuse or forget the request of a living friend, as the chief butler did that of Joseph: but oh, should I refuse or reject the last solemn request of my dying friend—dying, too, for me? Surely here would be an amount of base ingratitude almost unknown in human affairs, and I might expect that death and the grave would start forth as swift witnesses

against me! And yet the man who lives in the habitual neglect of this solemn ordinance, not merely disobeys the plain and positive command of Jesus, but turns away from the recollection of His sufferings and death, declines to accept of the pledges of His love, and refuses to perform that, His last dying request, made with His expiring breath on the very night in which He was betrayed. Oh, surely, "whosoever shall thus be ashamed of Christ, and of His words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

But we pass on to observe, that as we are thus bound by the command and by the dying request of Jesus to the commemoration of His love in this solemn ordinance, so are we equally bound by the *nature of those things which we are invited to do*—It is our *duty* to do as commanded; but when we consider the nature of that which is commanded, we see at once that it is our highest *privilege* and *honour*. Our life, our happiness, our all, stand intimately connected with the due performance of it. For here we are called to the exercise of that highest privilege which God

vouchsafes to His believing people upon earth ; here we are invited to become the guests of the Lord God Almighty, to sit down at His table, to “ feed upon Him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.” Our spiritual host is the King of Zion ; our food, the body and blood of Christ, upon which we spiritually feed ; our fellow-guests, the “ heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” Here we are invited to commemorate His love, to shew forth His death, and thus to have the peculiar honour of being witnesses for Jesus ; here union and communion with Christ, our glorious Head, and the living members of His mystical body, is cemented and promoted ; we are one with Christ and Christ is one with us—one with Him by faith, one in spirit, one in love, one in principle, one in our spiritual desires ; here we have happy foretastes of coming bliss, we are helped forward on our journey Zionward and heavenward. Christ, as our king, commands us ; as our friend, He requests us ; and as our prophet, He counsels us. “ He knoweth our frame,” He considereth our weaknesses and our wants, and, therefore, as our king and priest, He hath provided a banquet which He knoweth to be needful for us ; and as our prophet, He

counsels us to come, declaring at the same time that "except we eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, we have no life in us:" so that thus, whether we look to the command and the request of Christ, or to the interest and well-being of our own immortal souls, we are equally bound to come. The man, therefore, who lives in the habitual neglect of this ordinance turns a deaf ear to the command of Christ, braves His anger, rejects the dying request of his Saviour, despises this highest honour, procured for him at a price so dear, pours contempt upon all its blessings; in fine, and in fact, he dishonours God and cheats his own soul.

My Christian reader, consider these then, ponder over them in a spirit of prayer; for "whoso is wise will consider these things, and they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

Thus have I endeavoured to shew that it is at once our privilege and duty to approach to the table of the Lord; so that, in fact, if we have any reverence for the authority, any dread of the displeasure of Jesus, we must come; if we are at all influenced by

His love, or respect His dying request, we shall come ; and if we have any regard for the interest and well-being of our own souls, we shall deem it our highest privilege and honour to be permitted to come.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE SHOULD COME TO THE
LORD'S SUPPER.

The importance of this inquiry shewn—Jeremy Taylor quoted—We should come in a spirit of humiliation and of true repentance, with a steadfast purpose to lead a godly life, a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, a thankful remembrance of His death, and be in charity with all men.—The necessity of this shewn in each case from *the nature of the ordinance itself to which we come*—Scruples of sincere but timid Christians considered—Kettlewell quoted.

AND now, let us advance to consider the spirit in which we should approach to this solemn and sacred ordinance. This is a most important inquiry, for the benefits, of which we may expect to be partakers, depend simply and entirely upon the spirit in which we approach to it: nor is this all; for as the benefits are great if we partake of it worthily, so is the danger great if we receive the same unworthily.

Upon this subject, Jeremy Taylor thus expresses himself: " Unless a man be a member of Christ, unless Christ dwell in him by a living faith, he does not eat the bread that came down from heaven ; they ' lick the rock,' saith St. Cyprian, ' but drink not the waters of its emanation ;' they receive the ' skin of the sacrament and bran of the flesh,' saith St. Bernard ; but it is in this divine nutriment, as it is in some fruits, the skin is bitterness and the inward juice is salutary and pleasant : the outward symbols never bring life, but they can bring death ; and they of whom it can be said ' they eat no spiritual meat, but they eat the sign of Christ,' must also remember what old Simeon said in his prophecy of Christ, ' He is a sign set for the fall of many ;' but his flesh and blood spiritually eaten is resurrection from the dead." Thus we see, that as it is the savour of life unto life to them that receive it worthily, so it may be the savour of death unto death to them that receive it unworthily. How important, then, the consideration, In what spirit shall we approach to this ordinance ? We have seen that necessity is laid upon us, yea, that woe is unto us if we come not ; but in what spirit shall we come ?

This do then, I would say, *humbly*; draw near in a spirit of humiliation and of true repentance, bewailing your manifold sins and transgressions; come not in the haughty spirit of the Pharisee, but in the humble spirit of the publican; cry out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Humility is, indeed, at all times, one of the first of Christian graces; "our profession is to follow Christ and to be made like unto Him;" and He was meek and lowly in heart. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble;" He dwelleth with him that is of a lowly and contrite spirit. When St. Austin was asked, What is the first of Christian graces? he answered, "Humility;" which the second? "Humility;" what the third? "Humility." Thus, whether I look to my own state or safety, it is very meet, right, and my bounden duty, that I should at all times endeavour to maintain an humble, contrite, and a lowly spirit. Here is my safety; the storms that rend the mountain-ash pass over and leave in safety the lowly shrub that grows in the vale beneath. "A haughty spirit goeth before a fall; and before honour is humility." But oh, surely, when I approach to this most solemn of all Christian ordinances, it is peculiarly

befitting that I should do so in a spirit of deep humiliation and of true repentance. The very nature of the ordinance, when truly considered, is eminently calculated to awaken feelings of the deepest contrition; for there the sorrows of a suffering Saviour are made to pass before me: wounded and bruised, bathed in sweat, He seems, as it were, from Gethsemane's garden and Calvary's cross, to call upon me to consider the nature of those sins which draw forth sorrows so deep. Thus, while I contemplate the ignominies and the agonies of the cross, my thoughts are forcibly thrown back upon the state of mine own soul, there to contemplate and mourn over those sins which fixed Him to the cross; I remember that "He was wounded for our transgressions, that He was bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and that with His stripes we are healed." Besides, if we consider the privileges to which we are called in this ordinance—to feed upon the body and blood of our Saviour, surely we must feel and confess that we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under His table. Thus, whether we look to the nature or to the privileges of this ordinance, surely it

is most becoming that, sinful and unworthy as we are, we should draw near in a spirit of true repentance and of deep humiliation. And is it not in this spirit that we are taught and encouraged by our Church to approach? In answer to the question of her Catechism, "What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?" the answer is, "To examine themselves, whether they *repent* them truly of their former sins." Thus, repentance is the first thing she insists upon. And again, in her Communion Service, she invites those that "*do truly and earnestly repent of their sins,*" to draw near in faith. And then the communicant, meekly kneeling on his knees, makes the following confession to Almighty God:—"Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men; we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us,

have mercy upon us, most merciful Father." And again, "We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table." And again, "We confess that we are not worthy through our manifold sins to offer unto God any sacrifice." Thus we see that we should approach to the table of the Lord in a spirit of humility and of true repentance.

But this repentance must be accompanied with an earnest desire and a steadfast purpose, through God's grace, to amend our ways and to lead a new life, "steadfastly purposing," says our Church Catechism, "to lead a new life;" that is, of course, a life in conformity to the will and word of God. How proper it is that we should come in this spirit to the table of the Lord, may be seen by a consideration of the nature of the ordinance itself; for is it not a sacrament? And what means the word sacrament, but *oath*? For there it is that we renew again the oaths of our allegiance to Christ our King; there it is that we renew again the vows of our baptismal covenant, and solemnly engage again that we will fight manfully under the banners of His

cross "against sin, the world, and the devil." And accordingly we proceed in the Communion Service, in the most solemn manner, to "offer and present unto the Lord ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Him," confessing our unworthiness, but beseeching Him at the same time to "accept this our bounden duty and service." How awful is all this, if it be accompanied with no sincere desire, no steadfast purpose of the heart, to amend the life!

But as all our own resolutions and endeavours, unless formed in an humble dependence upon the preventing grace and sustaining power of God, are nothing worth, so must we draw near to His Sacrament in the exercise of a lively faith. "Without faith, indeed, it is impossible to please God:" without faith there is, there can be, no access to God. Christ Himself is "the way;" no man can come unto the Father but by Him; but it is faith alone that unites us to Him, and enables us to approach through Him to God. Christ Himself has been beautifully described as "the glorious arch that spans the mighty gulf fixed between God and man: His twofold nature forms the two foundations, the unity of His person the

keystone of the arch : the one foundation rests on earth, for He is man ; the other foundation rests beside the throne of God, for He is God." It is necessary, then, to everlasting salvation, that we rightly believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and the right faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man : if He be not God, He were too low for us to reach the Father by Him ; if He be not man, He were too high for us to climb by Him to God.

Thus our faith must have Christ Himself and His glorious finished work for its object : we must believe that He, as God and man in one Christ, hath offered unto God a sacrifice which is " a full, perfect, and sufficient oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world ;" and our dependence must be simply and solely upon His finished work. So that our faith must have Christ and His work for its object, the truth and promises of God for its support, salvation in connexion with God's glory for its end ; and it must be in its nature a lively faith, far different from that dead faith which devils may possess,—a lively faith, which unites us to Christ, who is our life. So that if we have not this faith we are not in a state

of acceptance with God ; we are not in a state of justification ; for “ we are justified by faith,” saith the Apostle ; and, “ Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit,” saith the Thirteenth Article of our Church, “ are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ ; yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.” Now bear this in mind, and you will easily perceive why faith must be a necessary qualification to the right receiving of the Supper of the Lord : for, in the first place, we are not worthy to come at all, but in and through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ ; but if we have no faith in Him, then we are unworthy, unbidden, unwelcome guests.

Then look again at the nature of the ordinance. In the first place, it is a spiritual feast—we feed upon the body and blood of Christ ; but they are taken, are received, by the faithful alone. We feed upon Him in our hearts by *faith* ; but if we have no faith, then we may eat the elements to our condemnation, but we are not partakers of the spiritual feast. Then again, we renew our baptismal vow, to

fight "against sin, the world, and the devil," but it is mere presumption to promise to do so in our own strength, if we have no faith in Him who is the strength of our salvation. "For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Then, again, we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and present our bodies and souls a living sacrifice to God; but, forasmuch as this sacrifice is not of faith, it is not well-pleasing to God; and the Lord will regard it as He did the faithless offering of Cain,—He will not have respect unto it.

So that thus, if we would come in an acceptable spirit, we must come in the spirit of faith. Come, then, "be not faithless, but believing;" believing the record of God's pardoning mercy through Christ; fully believing the promises of God made to us in this Sacrament, fully expecting to realise the presence and the blessing of God; come in this spirit, "not faithless, but believing;" not doubting, but trusting. "Having therefore," may we not say with the Apostle, "having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a high-priest over the

house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Thus must we draw near in faith.

But to our faith we must add a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ. One of the first and great objects of the Sacrament is to assist us to remember Christ, His sufferings, His death, His love: "This do in *remembrance* of me." But, oh, surely, it becometh well the just to be thankful, when they call to mind and remember the sufferings and death of Him who died that we might live! The death of Christ! it is the most wondrous manifestation of God's love to a guilty world that ever the universe beheld! "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him!" Herein we see that "God is love." Oh, I may meditate upon all the wonders of God's creative power and goodness; I may walk in thought amid the glories of creation, "the moon and the stars which thou, O God, hast ordained;" I may contemplate my own person, "fearfully and wonderfully made," and dwell

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upon the varied manifestations of His providential care over me; the blessings of His bounty, and the protection of His power; how "in him I live and move, and have my being," and well-being; how earth, and air, and sea, and all nature around, contribute to my happiness, and combine to declare that "God is love:" but when I turn to the yet more wondrous display of God's love in redemption's finished work upon Calvary's cross, oh, I behold there a breadth, a length, and a depth, which passeth knowledge; here

"Imagination's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away!"

A love which wakes the song of men and angels in heaven and earth; and which, if proclaimed and proffered in its dark and everlasting dungeons, would cause all hell to resound with new songs of praise! The death of Christ! it proclaims the most wondrous deliverance to a guilty world; liberty to the captive, pardon to the guilty, salvation to the lost, sight to the blind, life to the dead,—

"Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled."

It summons up and presents before me the dark array of mine own sins, and discovers

the fearfulness of my guilt; and while I thus stand enveloped in the cloud, there bursts through it bright beams of God's love, scattering as a cloud my transgressions, and inviting me, a guilty rebel, to become an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, rolling back the everlasting doors of heaven, and inviting me to enter into this glorious paradise of God! Oh, the death of Christ! the love it displays—the blessings it secures! Now all this is brought before us in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. "This do in remembrance of me;" and "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till He come."

Surely, then, we should approach this ordinance with a thankful remembrance of His death? As often, then, as the table of the Lord is spread, meditate upon these things—His death, His sufferings, His passion; the blessings that are thereby secured to you; how you, who were alienated from the life of God, are thus brought into a state of reconciliation, made a child of God, an heir of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Meditate upon this wondrous display of God's love, extended to you at the cost of the death of His Son; meditate, I say, upon these things, till the

natural enmity of the heart is subdued. And while you are thus musing, the fire of sacred love will kindle, and at the last you will speak with your tongue, and feel and say in the strains of our Communion Service,—“Above all things ye must give most humble and hearty thanks to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man; who did humble Himself, even to the death upon the cross, for us, miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death; that He might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life.” “Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name; evermore praising thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory: Glory be to thee, O Lord Most High.”

But, lastly, we must come forward to the table of the Lord in a spirit of charity and of love toward our fellow-creatures and our fellow-Christians. “By this,” says our blessed Lord, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” When our blessed Lord was asked, “Which is

the great commandment in the law?" He answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. xxii. 39.)

"Love," saith the Apostle Paul, "worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law:" and again he exhorts us to "forbear, and to forgive one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us." And the Apostle John declares, that if we have no love to our brother we have no love to God; so that, if we are at all animated by any spirit of love toward God, we shall be also animated by a spirit of love toward man. But surely, as it is thus necessary that we should at all times be animated by a spirit of love toward our neighbour, so there is a peculiar necessity when we draw near to the table of the Lord that we should be in charity with all men. For let us look to the nature of the ordinance: it is not merely a sacrament; it is not merely the Supper of the Lord, in which we feed upon His body and blood; it is not

only an ordinance in which we commemorate His forgiving love, and are thus excited to forgive each other, “as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us;” but it is also a *communion*—a *communion of saints*, in which we meet together as one Christian family, at one table, and being many, are partakers of one bread: a communion, in which we thus pledge ourselves to renewed fellowship and friendship one with another: a communion, one of the great objects of which is, not only to unite us more closely with Christ our head, but to unite us more closely with our fellow-Christians. And in this view it was regarded by the early Christians.

The historian Pliny says of them, in his letters to the Emperor Trajan,—“They assemble early in the morning, and sing an hymn to Christ as God, and then bind themselves mutually in their sacrament, which is a sacred oath, not to join in committing any wickedness, but religiously to keep off from the same; and to be no thieves, adulterers, nor injurious, nor false, and perfidious persons; and having done those things, and given these assurances of mutual honesty and kindnesses to each other, they depart home, and meet again at a promiscuous and friendly treat, where they in-

nocently feast together." This "friendly treat" was what the New Testament calls their "feasts of charity" (Jude, verse 12), which was different from the Sacrament itself, but was generally held at the same time; a feast in which the rich and the poor all met together as Christians at one common table, and where they thus cherished and renewed their feelings and their vows of fellowship, friendship, and of Christian love toward each other; and were in the habit of closing the whole by embracing each other, according to the exhortation of the Apostle Paul,—“Greet ye one another with an holy kiss;” or to that of the Apostle Peter, “with a kiss of charity.” So that thus, from the very nature of the ordinance itself, which is a *communion*, in which we pledge ourselves to renewed love with each other, we see that it is necessary that we should draw near in a spirit of charity and love toward our fellow-creatures and our fellow-Christians.

But, again, we have the express command of Scripture, “If thou bring thy gift to the altar,” says our blessed Lord, “and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and

then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. v. 23.) "Let us keep the feast," says the Apostle Paul, "not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." And he sharply rebukes the Church at Corinth, because, says he, "When ye come together in the church I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it." So that thus we must come in a spirit of charity or love. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you," and draw near in the exercise of love; forgiving one another, "as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." But, oh, let it be a love not in word, but in deed—a love which will manifest itself in all the acts of Christian kindness and of sympathy toward our suffering and our poorer brethren, "distributing to the necessity of saints." How zealous our Church is that this love shall be manifested in acts of Christian charity, may be seen from the fact that she is careful upon the occasion of the celebration of the Lord's Supper to afford an opportunity to "remember the poor," exhorting her members to the same by the reading of select pas-

sages of Scripture ; and then, after the alms have been placed upon the holy table, we are taught to join in the following prayer,—“ Almighty and everliving God, who by thy holy Apostle hast taught us to make prayers, and supplications, and to give thanks for all men ; we humbly beseech thee most mercifully to accept our alms and oblations, and to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto thy Divine Majesty ; beseeching thee to inspire continually the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord : and grant that all they that do confess thy holy name may agree in the truth of thy holy word, and live in unity and godly love.” Draw near, then, Christian reader ; draw near in the exercise of love, and “ be in charity with all men.”

Thus have I endeavoured to point out and to illustrate the spirit in which we should meet around the table of the Lord. We must come in the spirit of true repentance, with a steadfast purpose to lead a life in conformity with the will and word of God ; we must have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, a thankful remembrance of His death, and “ be in charity with all men.” And as all this is set before us in our Church Catechism, so it is

pressed upon our attention in the following invitation of our Communion Service,—“Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon your knees.” Let us draw near, then, in this spirit, so shall we be meet partakers of these holy mysteries.

But here I can well conceive an humble-minded and a sincere Christian, after reading this part of our subject, turning away with the feeling upon the mind,—“Well, if all this be required to constitute me a worthy communicant, I feel that, perhaps, I had better, for the most part, absent myself for the future from the table of my Lord; for, in truth, I do not at all times when the table is spread experience that depth of feeling which you appear to have described as characteristic of a worthy communicant: shall I not, therefore, upon such occasions, absent myself?” I answer, No—by no means. Let us pause for a mo-

ment. We wish not to "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax"—we wish not to discourage any sincere Christian, however weak his graces, from approaching to this sacred ordinance. But come, let us for a moment reason together; for consider, we have not, after all, insisted upon more than will be found at all times in the character of every true Christian: for surely every Christian man does repent him truly of his sins, is living by the faith of the Son of God, and is endeavouring to manifest that he is a child of God by keeping His commandments, which are love to God and man? Nay, we have not insisted upon more than is necessarily required in every one who would approach to God in an acceptable manner, through the means of prayer and of praise: for surely we must come confessing our sins, with an humble reliance upon the merits of Him who is the "one Mediator between God and man," and asking to be forgiven as we forgive others. "For if we, from our hearts," says Christ, "forgive not every one his brother their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us." So that what will constitute us acceptable worshippers, through the means of prayer, will

also fit us to approach in an acceptable manner to the table of the Lord.

But here it will be replied,—“True, the same graces are required for acceptable prayer ; but then they are required in a much greater degree when we approach to the table of the Lord.” To which I reply, Not *necessarily so* ; it is, indeed, most *desirable*, when we approach to this solemn ordinance, that our repentance should be more deep, our faith more lively, and our love more ardent : it is most desirable, because the ordinance is more solemn in its nature, more affecting scenes of suffering and of love are brought before us : still it is not *necessary* that they should be so in order to constitute us worthy and acceptable communicants. Upon this subject, Kettlewell, in his “Treatise upon the Holy Sacrament,” thus expresses himself:—

“Although,” says he, “this be *commendable* and much to be desired in us, yet it is not *necessary, or indispensably required* of us, but that we may communicate worthily when it is otherwise ; for ‘if we have these tempers in *such a degree* as is necessary to our eternal happiness, we have so much of them as will render us worthy and welcome guests at this,

as well as at every other, ordinance of Christ ; and this is plain from hence, because when we have them in a saving degree, which would procure our acceptance in other parts of God's service, they fit us for communion of Christ and of glorified saints in heaven, and so cannot leave us unworthy to communicate with Him and them here on earth. Whether these virtues be at the pitch of the *strong* or only of the *weak* in faith, we are accepted of Him since He accepts both ; and when once He accepts us, we may approach to Him in any place." " And this," he proceeds, " as we have great cause to believe, the ancients thought, because they made it not an *extraordinary separate thing*, as we do now, *but an ordinary and constant part of the Christian worship*. It went usually along with the other parts of the service, and they who came to prayers, came also to the blessed Sacrament ; the same preparations, and the same persons being admitted to both." " And thus we see," he proceeds again, " however commendable it may be that people should come to this holy Sacrament with more intense acts and higher preparation than would serve to any other parts of worship, yet that it is not *necessary* they should do so ;

they may be welcome and worthy partakers in this ordinance, who are worthy to partake in others, so that they are fit for it who are fit for any other religious service: the same virtues and the same degrees may suffice thereto."

I trust, then, that what I have here said will be quite sufficient to remove any scruples from the mind of timid, but sincere Christians, whose faith may be weak, or who are not enabled to realise the graces of repentance, faith, or love, in a greater degree when the table is spread, than upon more ordinary occasions. We say it is very *desirable* that they should; still, it is not *necessary*, in order that they should be acceptable communicants. We wish not by this to encourage any to approach in an improper spirit, or in a careless manner; or yet that they should conceive low views of this sacred ordinance: we merely wish to encourage the sincere, but timid Christian, who might otherwise be discouraged, and who stands in peculiar need of this ordinance, to deepen his repentance, strengthen his faith, and kindle his love. Nor yet do we wish to dissuade others from going on to a higher degree of perfection; for assuredly, for the most part, the benefits of which we may expect to be par-

takers, will be in proportion to the depth of our repentance, the strength of our faith, or the ardour of our love. So then, I would say (which may be quite enough to silence all scruples), he that cometh with faith, though weak, and in the ordinary exercise of Christian graces, "doeth well." He that cometh in a more elevated strain of piety (which is enough to encourage us to go forward), "doeth better."

But do you ask me to gather within the limits of a single sentence what may qualify one for communicating in an acceptable manner? Then I would say, Come with repentance and faith; but oh, let it be a true repentance, a repentance which will lead you to hate and to forsake sin: let it be a faithful dependence upon the merits and work of Jesus Christ, for righteousness and for salvation; let it be a lively faith, which worketh by *love*, and overcomes the world. Draw near in this spirit, "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;" "as having nothing" in yourself, "yet possessing all things," through Christ. Draw near, "bending beneath the two-fold load of your own sins and your Saviour's love;" weeping "between the porch and the altar," under a sense of your manifold sins and transgressions; and yet "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God" as you contemplate

the finished work of Jesus. And here, perhaps, I may be permitted, by the aid of a simple illustration, to impress this upon the mind: we shall select our illustration from the history of the Jews, the ancient people of God. They were carried away on account of their sins to Babylon; meanwhile, their temple, which was the glory of all lands, lay in ruins: at length, however, at the proclamation of Cyrus, they are permitted to return to rebuild their temple. And now the foundation is laid: "And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests and the Levites (Ezra iii. 11,) sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy." And thus, in one and the same assembly, and upon one and the same occasion, was heard the noise of the shouting of joy and the noise of the weeping

of the people. The old men wept for sorrow as they looked back upon the past, the young men shouted for joy as they contemplated the prospect of their future temple. And so it is with the *sorrow* of the old and the *joy* of the young men, that we should draw near to this ordinance, weeping over our past transgressions, and yet joying in God through Christ, with the tear of penitential sorrow in the eye, and yet with the light of holy faith and of joy beaming in the countenance; troubled (like Mary the mother of Jesus, when the angel appeared to her) at the thought of our sins; and yet, with her, exclaiming, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour:" weeping like another Mary at the feet of Jesus, under a sense of our guilt, and yet with her kissing His feet and anointing them with ointment, under a feeling of grateful love for His pardoning mercy.

O my Christian reader, let us draw near in this spirit to the table of the Lord, with true repentance, and with an humble, living, loving faith in God's mercy through Christ; so shall we be meet partakers of these holy mysteries.

CHAPTER V.

OBJECTIONS AND EXCUSES CONSIDERED AND
ANSWERED.

The Neglect of this Ordinance—Whence it proceeds —Not from any Indifference upon the part of our Church—This shewn—The real Cause of this Neglect shewn—Various Objections and Excuses considered and answered—An earnest Expostulation addressed to Halters.

BUT now we must come down for a little from the contemplation of the lofty and sacred theme which has hitherto engaged our attention, to meet the prejudices, to answer the objections, or remove the difficulties which stand in the way of those who are in the habit of absenting themselves from this sacred ordinance. Too weak to believe, too timid to trust, too ignorant to understand, or yet too wicked to value its blessings, when the table is spread, and the invitation is sent forth, many with one consent begin to make excuse: and while

numbers throng the courts of the house of the Lord, join in a spirit of devotion in the sacred services of our Church, and listen with interest to the word as preached, few,—alas, how few!—are found to come up to offer unto God their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, in the use of this holy Eucharist. Now, why is this? It is not because they do not, in word at least, acknowledge the authority of Jesus; it is not because His command is not plain or His invitation pressing; it is not because our Church is not zealous to press upon the attention of her members the invitation of her Saviour: she hath prepared two exhortations, one to be read upon ordinary occasions, the other “in case the minister shall see the people negligent to come to the holy Communion;” in which he thus proceeds,—“I bid you all that are here present, and beseech you, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, that ye will not refuse to come thereto, being so lovingly called and bidden by God Himself.” And again, “I, for my part, shall be ready; and, according to mine office, I bid you in the name of God, I call upon you in Christ’s behalf, I exhort you, as ye love your own salvation, that ye will be partakers of this holy Communion. And as the Son of God did

vouchsafe to yield up His soul by death upon the cross for your salvation, so it is your duty to receive the Communion in remembrance of the sacrifice of His death, as He Himself hath commanded." And thus is it in language so pressing, and by arguments so powerful, that she urges upon the attention of her children the command and the invitation of her Lord. Why, then, may we not reasonably ask, why is it that many—that so many—who throng forward to the courts of God's house, are found, in sinful disobedience to His command, to turn away from the table which He hath spread?

The *secret* cause I believe to be this, that while many are willing to go certain lengths in the service of God, they are not prepared to offer to Him the whole sacrifice and service of the heart. They are willing with Herod to hear of Christ, do many things, and hear gladly; but, oh, with him they have at the same time some secret sin which they cherish in their hearts, from which they are unwilling to be divorced. With the young man in the Gospel, they are ready to cry out, as regards the whole code of morality,—“All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” but, oh, when Christ makes the demand, “My son,

give me thine heart," then with him they are found to go away sorrowful: they are unwilling to join in that service, in which they present themselves, soul and body, as a holy and lively sacrifice, unto God. No, they will do much, but this they will not, they cannot, do; almost, but not altogether, persuaded to make a full and entire surrender of themselves, in heart and soul, as Christians to God. Hence the table is spread, and many who have thus far followed Christ are now found, with the disciples of old, to go back, and walk no more with Him. Meanwhile they fortify themselves with certain excuses, by the which they strengthen themselves in their continued acts of disobedience; they erect a barrier of difficulties and of doubts, behind which they remain safely entrenched: they plead certain excuses, by which they satisfy (it may be) their own consciences, but, oh, which will not satisfy God: they plead, for the most part, their sins as their excuses, and thus plead their disobedience of God's command as a justification for their continuing to disobey *this* command. How vain, how fruitless, yea, how wicked! We mean not to say, however, that there are not many who are sincerely desirous of de-

dicating themselves to the service of their Saviour, who may not be deterred by doubts and difficulties, that seem to settle down like a cloud upon the mind. For their sakes, therefore, we are willing to turn aside and meet them in their own quarters. Come then, we must go out, and follow them into the highways and the hedges, the streets and the lanes; we must meet them on their own ground, and "compel them to come in," that God's house may be filled. Difficulties must be met, doubts dispersed, excuses exposed; the way of the Lord must be prepared, his paths made straight; every valley must be filled, every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked made straight, the rough places smooth, that all flesh may see the salvation of God. "Produce then your cause, bring forth your strong reasons," that we may see and know, and consider together, the excuses and the causes which let and hinder you in running with patience the full Christian course which is set before you.

But here I must observe, that it is by no means my intention to bring forward all the various excuses which I might easily collect from books, or from other sources. No, it is

simply my intention to take notice of such leading excuses as I have practically met with in the course of my own parochial visiting, convinced as I am, that if men will but, with a true and sincere heart, ponder over the plain and positive command of Jesus, before it "the mountain will become a plain;" that if men will but give their hearts to God, then the miry clay of their excuses, smitten down, like the image of Nebuchadnezzar, by the stone cut out without hands, will be broken to pieces, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor. No, I shall simply take notice of a few objections, which seem to be the principal ones, and I shall endeavour to treat them in a very plain and homely, and, I trust, by God's grace, to some in a convincing manner.

Come, then, let us enter the cottage of the poor man, and hear from his own lips an account of the reasons he has to offer for absenting himself from this holy ordinance. "I trust," we would address him—"I trust, my friend, that you are in the habit of attending upon the Lord's table?" "Well, no," the reply is, "I am sorry to say I am not." "Oh, I am sorry, indeed, for that, and I confess that I had expected better things from you. You

appear to be very regular in your attendance on the Sabbath-day, to be very attentive in the house of God, why is it, then, that you turn away from His table, and refuse to meet the Saviour in the use of this His own ordinance?" The reply is, "I really am afraid to do so—I am afraid to go forward." "Well, before I inquire about the causes of your fear, let me simply ask you, Are you not afraid to remain away?" "No; why should I?" is, for the most part, the reply. "I don't exactly see what reason I have to fear because I don't go forward." "The reasons, then, you have to fear, are these. You are living in disobedience to the plain and positive command of Christ your Master. You are in the constant habit of rejecting His dying request, and of turning away from those blessings which He procured for you at the price of His own blood. God's command was that the Jew who rejected the Passover should be cut off from Israel, and you have very little reason to expect God's blessing while you continue in this state of disobedience, but much reason to fear His displeasure." "Oh, I confess that I never fully considered the matter in that light before." "Well, you will see from this, at least,

that your conscience has not been faithful ; you have been taking a one-sided view of the subject ; you have been afraid to go forward in obedience to His command, but not afraid to remain away in sinful disobedience. But now, let me hear the reason of your fear ; why is it that you have been afraid to go forward to the Lord's table ?" " Oh, I feel that I am not worthy to do so." " Well," I reply, " if this feeling of your unworthiness proceeds from an humbled sense of your many failings and shortcomings, then you can never cherish this feeling too much ; we are never safe unless when we feel it. We are taught to say, after we have done all that was commanded us, ' We are unprofitable servants ;' and it is in this feeling of our own unworthiness that we must draw near to God, in prayer, in praise, and in the use of every means, confessing, as we do in our Church Service, that ' We have left undone what we ought to have done, and done what we ought not to have done ; that there is no health in us ; and that we are miserable sinners.' And it is in this spirit, too, of our own unworthiness that we must come forward to the Lord's table, acknowledging and confessing, as we do in our Communion Service,

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that 'we do not presume to come to God's table trusting in our own righteousness,' and that 'we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under His table.' So that, if this feeling of your own unworthiness proceeds from an humbled sense of your shortcomings and failings, it should never prevent you from coming to the table of the Lord. But here, will you allow me to ask, are you living in the habitual course of any known sin?" To which question the reply is often a tacit confession, acknowledging that the case is so; admitting, in fact, that this is the reason why they feel that they are not in a fit state to go forward, and then asking, "Will you have me to go to the Lord's table in this state?" To which I reply, "Do you repent you of your sins? are you striving against sin? and are you really, earnestly, desirous to be delivered from the power of your sins?" Suppose the reply to this question be,—“ I cannot truly say that I am; I have never thought much on the subject, or, indeed, made any great efforts against my sins.” “Then I tell you, you are not in a fit state to come to this holy ordinance. You can receive no benefit, but may receive harm; but I tell you, at the same

time, that while your sins quite unfit you to come, they do not excuse you at all : your sins never can be an excuse for the neglect of your duty. You are guilty if you stay away, and you are guilty if you come : you are quite unfit to come to this holy ordinance, nay, more, you are unfit to come to any other sacred ordinance while you thus live in the allowed course of unrepented sin : you are in a very awful state, and if you die in this state you must be lost for ever. Verily, there is but a step betwixt thee and death ; there is but the breath in your nostrils between yourself and an eternity of woe ; you are suspended by the single and slender thread of life over a yawning gulf, into the which you may at any moment be dropped. Arise, then, why tarriest thou ? Cry and call upon God ; ‘repent of this thy wickedness, and pray to God, if, perhaps, the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.’ Let heaven and hell, and time and eternity, and death and judgment, rouse thee from thy state of impenitent guilt. Call upon the Lord while He is near, flee to Jesus, escape for thy life, stay not in all the plain, break off your sins by repentance, so shall you then be meet to be a partaker of these holy mysteries.

But if, instead of replying that you are living in this impenitent state, the reply be, 'It is true I am living, I feel, in sin, but I can sincerely say that I truly repent of my sins, and am daily striving against sin; but all to very little purpose, 'for when I would do good evil is present with me;' sin overtakes me, and I am ready to cry out, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' and I feel that in this state I cannot come to the table of the Lord.' I answer, if you really repent of sins, are willing to give up your sins, and are daily striving against sin, then you are in a fit state to approach to the table of the Lord. Come then, draw near, be not afraid, and you may expect, in the use of this ordinance, to find that strength to enable you to overcome your sins which you have sought for to so little purpose without it. You never can overcome your sins in your own strength; Christ is the strength of your salvation, but His strength must be sought for in the use of means, and of all means, perhaps, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is the very one in which we are warranted to expect the largest increase of grace: for there we feed upon His body and blood, repentance is deepened, and

faith is confirmed. Be not discouraged, but draw near in faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort. Plead not, 'I am unworthy;' take heed that there be not something of the leaven of the self-righteous Pharisee in this excuse, for how long would you absent yourself?—till you have made yourself worthy? This you can never do—

‘All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him.’

You must come, not as the Pharisee but as the publican; you must come, not as a saint but as a sinner:

‘Not the righteous,—
Sinners—Jesus came to call.’

You must come confessing your unworthiness, and you are most worthy to come when you feel most deeply your own unworthiness. ‘When I am weak,’ says the Apostle, ‘then am I strong;’ for this simple reason, because our worthiness and our strength is alone of Christ; and most strong and worthy when, through a sense of our own weakness and unworthiness, we are driven to Him.”

I trust what I have here advanced may be sufficient to meet the general excuse, “I am not worthy,” which keeps back so many from

this sacred ordinance. You are "afraid to come," you plead. Then I ask you, "Are you not afraid to remain away?" You feel you are not worthy to come; but this is the very spirit in which you should come. You are living in sin; then repent of and forsake your sin. This you are unwilling to do. Then I tell you that you are unfit for this, or for any other sacred ordinance, while, at the same time, your sin is no excuse, and I leave you to decide with yourself what you are fit for. Oh! but you do truly repent of your sins, and strive against sin, but sin overcomes you? Then I bid you, in God's name, draw near to this holy ordinance, and you may here find strength to enable you to overcome your sins. It is in obeying Christ that we may expect that His strength will be made perfect in our weakness. "Stretch forth thine hand," said our blessed Saviour to the man with the withered hand, who, instead of stopping to explain that that was the very thing he was unable to do, at the command of Christ made the attempt,—“he stretched it forth,” and while doing so, “it was restored whole like as the other.” (Matt. xii. 13.) Stretch forth, then, I would say, in obedience to Christ's command. “This do,”—stretch forth the

hand of faith, though withered, and, in doing so, you may expect to receive strength from Him who commands you to do so.

2. But many are kept back from this holy ordinance through a fear of incurring that guilt and those judgments which the Apostle Paul mentions in the eleventh chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, as the consequences of eating and drinking unworthily. Now, feeling that there is some weight in this objection, I shall, in the first place, quote the passage from Scripture itself, and then I shall endeavour, as briefly and plainly as possible, to explain its meaning. It is to be found in the 11th chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. At the 27th verse he says, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord;" and in verse 29, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Now, in order that we may fully understand this passage of holy Scripture, let us briefly consider what is the meaning of "eating and drinking unworthily;" what is the meaning of being "guilty of the body and blood of Christ;" and, especially, what is the meaning of that word which is

here translated "*damnation*," the fear of incurring which has kept back so many from the table of the Lord. I would observe that to "eat and drink unworthily" does not mean that we are not worthy to come; for, as I shewed before, we are at all times unworthy in ourselves to come: we confess *that* in our Communion Service, and the deeper we *feel that*, the better. The centurion, as recorded in the Gospel, confessed to Christ that he was not worthy; and yet the elders of the Jews bare witness that "he was worthy," and Christ Himself said of him, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." So that thus we may come forward with a very deep feeling of our own unworthiness, and be in no danger at all of eating and drinking unworthily. What, then, is the meaning of eating and drinking unworthily? We should look to the manner in which the Corinthians did so. In the first place, they came forward in a spirit of *division* among themselves. "I hear," he says, "that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it." Then they came, "not discerning the Lord's body;" not considering the nature of that holy ordinance to which they came. Then they came in a profane and carnal spirit, absolutely converting the holy

table of the Lord into a common and carnal repast, for the indulgence of their own inordinate appetites and passions ; and “one was hungry, and another was drunken,” by which they thus despised the Church of God. This was the eating and drinking unworthily in the Corinthians which the Apostle reproves. But though, from the nature of things, we cannot be guilty of the like excess, yet we may come forward in the same spirit, and eat and drink unworthily. All those who come forward in a proud, impenitent, and self-righteous spirit,—in a careless and profane spirit, not considering the nature of this holy ordinance,—in a carnal and worldly-minded spirit, merely in conformity with the custom of the country, or because they think it looks respectable, or qualifies them for holding certain offices ; all who have no other object than this in coming to the table of the Lord, and who come in this spirit, have too much reason to believe that they “eat and drink unworthily ;” but, as Mr. Scott observes in his Commentary, “the humble penitent, the trembling believer, who relies on a crucified Saviour, and longs to live to His glory, should fear no snare in this institution.”

Thus we see what it is to eat and drink unworthily, and how different it is from a feeling of our own unworthiness. Let me illustrate this. I am not worthy to be invited to the court of our gracious sovereign ; but if she is pleased to invite me, it becomes my privilege and duty to go, for the queen's invitations are commands. But then I should conduct myself in a spirit that will shew that I do not forget who I am and where I am ; and if I do this, then, though unworthy to be invited, I conduct myself in a becoming, in a worthy manner. But if instead of this I go to court in a haughty manner, forgetful of mine own station, not rendering honour to whom honour is due, or respecting the presence of my sovereign, assuredly I conduct myself in an unbecoming, in an unworthy manner, and may expect the displeasure of the court. And so it is with reference to this holy institution : we go because we are invited and commanded ; but then we should go with a feeling of our unworthiness to have been invited, and we should conduct ourselves in a spirit that will shew that we recollect who we are and where we are, and then we communicate worthily. But if instead of this we go in a proud and

haughty spirit, "not discerning the Lord's body," not reverencing the holy ordinance, or respecting the spiritual presence of the King of glory, assuredly then we eat and drink unworthily, and may expect to be visited with the displeasure of the King.

Having thus ascertained what is meant by eating and drinking unworthily,—that it means that we do so in a proud, carnal, and worldly-minded spirit,—let us look to the guilt we contract thereby, and to the punishment we incur.

The guilt is this, "we are guilty of the body and blood of Christ;" we shew no reverence for that holy ordinance, in which "Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us;" and are thus, in a certain measure, chargeable with the guilt of those who crucified the Lord of glory. We profane the most solemn ordinance, and are thus guilty of the blood of Christ; and assuredly this is a sin which we should be most fearful of committing. Still there is nothing said which would lead us to believe that it is a sin which will not (if repented of) find pardon with God. The actual betrayers and murderers of Christ were, many of them, afterwards washed in the blood of Jesus,

pardoned, and accepted, as you will find by consulting the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. At the 22d verse, Peter tells them, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;" and again, at the 36th verse, "whom ye have crucified." "Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousands souls." And we find them continuing "steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." So that thus the actual betrayers and murderers of Christ were many of them washed, justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Surely, then, the man who may have been guilty of eating and drinking unworthily need not despair of pardoning mercy; if he will truly repent,

there is forgiveness with God : and all other sins as well as this, if not repented of, must bring to destruction both of body and soul. And then we should remember that it was to the *Corinthians* that the Apostle thus addresses himself ; and we should remember how great their excess, how deep their sin : that they not merely came forward in an unworthy manner, but that they absolutely converted this solemn ordinance into a scene of riotous living, profaning its sacredness, indulging their bad passions and inordinate appetites, and by excess and drunkenness introducing confusion and shame into the Church of God. No marvel, then, that the Apostle rebukes them in language so strong. But though such be the guilt of eating and drinking unworthily, the humble-minded and sincere Christian, however weak his faith, however low his graces, has nothing to fear.

But the Apostle further adds, " He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." Now, the use of this word " damnation " has been a very great stumbling-block ; many supposing that it means eternal damnation, which most assuredly it does not. The word which is here

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translated "damnation" is sometimes rendered *condemnation*, and in some places *judgment*. In the passage before us, it manifestly signifies judgment—temporal judgment—not eternal damnation. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself; he brings down temporal judgment upon himself for so doing. What these temporal judgments were, we learn from the next verse,—“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” God had visited their awful profanation of this sacred ordinance with the temporal judgments of weakness and sickness, and even with death; but these judgments, so far from meaning eternal damnation, were the merciful *chastisements* of God, intended to bring them to a state of repentance, that thus they might *not* be eternally condemned with the world, as is manifest from the 32d verse, where he says, “But when we are judged, we are *chastened* of the Lord, that we should *not be condemned with the world*.”

Thus, I trust, we see what it is to eat and drink unworthily, what is the guilt we thereby incur, and what the judgment we are in danger of bringing down,—judgments, not eternal

but temporal, not to destroy but to reform ; the merciful chastisements of God's hands, by which He thus intended to bring the Church of Corinth, who profaned this sacred ordinance, to a state of repentance, that thus they might not be finally " condemned with the world." But how, it may be asked, shall we escape the guilt and danger ? Not, I answer, by absenting ourselves from the Lord's table, for then we sin ; we are guilty of the sin of disobedience and ingratitude : so that thus, if we eat and drink unworthily, we sin,—we are guilty of the body and blood of Christ ; if we remain away, we sin,—we are guilty of the sin of disobedience and ingratitude ; sin lieth upon the one extreme and upon the other. How, then, shall we escape both ? I answer, By following the advice of the Apostle, as given us in the 28th verse,—“ Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup ; ” “ Judge yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord : ” the path of duty is the path of safety.

But there is yet another objection which we wish to remark upon, and it shall be the last ; for, as I said before, I wish not to multiply or

to suggest objections : I simply take notice of such as I have practically met with, and I insert them in the order of the frequency with which they have been urged. It is objected then,—“ We wish not to go forward to this ordinance, it is a very solemn thing to do ; we make there great promises and vows to God, and we really do not like to bring ourselves under these obligations and responsibilities.”

To which I reply, it certainly is a very solemn thing to go forward to this holy ordinance. We do make very great promises and vows ; but then these promises and vows were upon us before. We are not making *new* vows ; we are *renewing* our vows : we are not bringing ourselves under any *new* obligations or responsibilities. These obligations and responsibilities were upon us before, and we cannot get rid of them, even if we would. It is true we offer and present ourselves, soul and body, a sacrifice to God ; but we acknowledge at the same time that it is our bounden duty and service, and that it is “ reasonable ” we should do so. For let us consider what is our duty towards God. Our duty towards God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, to

love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength ; to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put our whole trust in Him, to call upon Him, to honour His holy name and His word, and to serve Him truly all the days of our life. All this it is our duty to do, as being the creatures of His hand: created by His power, sustained by His providence, fed by His bounty, redeemed by His love, sanctified by His Spirit, we are under the highest possible obligations to devote ourselves entirely to the service of our God. Besides that, we are bound by His command, which is love to God in the highest possible degree, and love to our neighbour as ourselves. So that, whether we acknowledge it or not, we are under the highest possible obligations to devote ourselves, soul, body, and spirit, to the service of God. But we are bound, too, by vows, as well as by the reason of things, and by God's command ; for, in our baptism, our godfathers and godmothers did " promise and vow three things " in our names ; first, that we " should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh ;" secondly, that " we should believe all the Articles of the Christian

faith;" and, thirdly, that "we should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life;" and these promises we are bound, when we come of age, ourselves to perform. And accordingly we proceed, in the ordinance of Confirmation, to ratify and confirm the same, when in answer to the question as put by the bishop, "Do you here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe, and to do, all those things which your godfathers and godmothers then undertook for you?" We reply, "I do." I know that many absent themselves from Confirmation under a feeling that, unless they thus ratify and confirm their baptismal vows, they are not under the power of their obligations; but this is quite a mistake. They are bound to perform them when they come to the years of discretion, and that whether they are confirmed or otherwise. And, in like manner, many absent themselves from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, under a feeling that, unless they present themselves to God in the use of

this holy ordinance, they are not under the power of its obligations and responsibilities; but this is in a great measure, if not wholly, a mistake. We are bound by the highest obligations, as we have shewn, to love and serve God with heart, and strength, and soul; we are bound by the fact of our being and well-being, by all that we are and all that we hope for; we are bound by the command of God; we are bound by the vows of our baptism; and it is more than likely, the very persons who object have again bound themselves, by renewing their vows in the order of Confirmation: so that when we draw near to the table of the Lord, and there present ourselves a lively sacrifice to God, strictly speaking, we bring ourselves under the power of no *new* obligations; we there *renew* our vows to God, we look for His assistance to enable us to do that which was our duty to do; we express our own willingness to do so, we come and cry out, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." We dedicate ourselves anew to His service; which service was, and is at all times, our bounden duty, our reasonable service, as it is likewise a service which is perfect freedom, which is connected with our highest honour, interest, and well-being, for

time and for eternity. So that the man who absents himself from this holy ordinance with a view to escape the *new obligations* which he is supposed to bring himself under, is merely deceiving himself; he is under them already, and that whether he acknowledge it or otherwise; and he is also depriving his own soul of the benefits which he might have expected in this ordinance to enable him to perform them.

Still, it will be replied, " True, we see we are under the highest obligations to love and to serve God supremely; but when we come forward to the Lord's table, we make an open profession of our intention to do so; nay, more, we vow to God that we will do so. Now, we feel that we have not strength to do so; and is it not better to remain away from the Lord's table than to come forward and publicly make vows to God which we feel we have not strength to perform?" I answer at once, Decidedly not; for this simple reason, that we are not required to perform them in our own strength; and if we come forward confiding in our own strength our fall is certain. It was when Peter, too confident in his own strength, cried out, " Though I should die

with thee, yet will I not deny thee ;” it was upon that very night—the very night, be it remembered, in which he received the Supper of the Lord,—it was upon that very night that he denied his Saviour with oaths and with blasphemy : thus affording a melancholy proof of the weakness of our own strength in the hour of trial. No, we are not required to come in our own strength ; Christ Himself is “ the strength of our salvation,” and His strength is made perfect in our weakness. It is out of His fulness we are to draw grace for grace ; and this ordinance is especially for the “ strengthening and refreshing of our souls ;” and He has promised, “ My grace is sufficient for thee,” and that He “ will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, but will with the temptation (or, notwithstanding the temptation) also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.” So that, as the Apostle says, “ We can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us.” True, we may be sore tried and tempted ; so that, with the Psalmist, we may say, “ The snares of death compassed me round about, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me ; I found trouble and heaviness.” But if, with him, we

call upon the name of the Lord, "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul!" then, with him, we may also say, "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous: yea, our God is merciful; the Lord preserveth the simple. I was in misery, and he helped me." One consideration that ought to remove all doubts and fears is this,—it is Christ Himself who gives the command to come; He knoweth our weakness, for He was in all points tempted like as we are; and He who gives the command will also give us strength to obey the command. "Be not faithless, then, but believing."

I trust, then, that what I have here advanced may be sufficient to answer the objection,—“We wish not to come to this ordinance, because we bring ourselves under obligations which we feel we have not strength to perform.” I have shewn that, strictly speaking, we bring ourselves under no new obligations,—the obligations are upon us already; we renew our vows unto the Lord our God that we will endeavour to perform these obligations, by devoting ourselves to Him, and serving Him truly all the days of our life; and in doing so we are in the path of duty, and may expect to receive

strength from God to enable us to perform our vows.

Thus have I endeavoured to meet the prejudices, remove the doubts, and answer the excuses, of those who are in the habit of absenting themselves from this holy ordinance. Others of a similar nature might be advanced and answered in a similar manner, but we forbear; enough, we trust, has been already advanced to satisfy all reasonable doubts and scruples upon the subject, and we desire not to go beyond this. Indeed we feel assured that, for the most part, these excuses are rather the cloak that is made use of to conceal the true cause of men's neglect of this ordinance than the real causes themselves. The true cause we believe to be this, that men are not prepared to make a full and entire surrender of themselves to the service of God; hence their distaste for an ordinance so sacred, in which they profess to do so. With such, however, we would expostulate, in the language of the Prophet, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, choose Him; but if Baal—if sin, if the world—then choose and serve it." If conscience, and reason, and the word of God combine to tell you,

that true and real happiness for time and for eternity is to be found in seeking and serving this present world, why then be decided ; seek and serve it with heart and soul. But if conscience, and reason, and the word of God combine in declaring, that true and real happiness for time and for eternity is alone to be found in the favour of God, why then be decided ; seek and serve Him with heart and soul. But, oh, in a matter of such infinite importance, be not undecided ; “halt not between two opinions ;” it is vain, unreasonable, unmanly : “ye cannot serve God and mammon ; choose you this day which you will have.” But, oh, we would say,—

“ Make but trial of His love,
Experience will decide
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in His truth confide.”

The world will deceive you, friends may all fail, foes all unite ; it will leave you hopeless and comfortless in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. But, oh, serve God in life, and He will not forsake you in death ; He will be your comfort in life, your support in death, and your portion for ever. I have waited and watched by the dying beds of many ;

I have marked the perfect man, beheld the upright man, and seen that the end of that man was peace. I have listened to his animating expressions of faith, to his happy anticipations of future glory ; I have seen how calm, how peaceful, how collected, in the prospect of death,—“ in the evening time there was light :” but never have I heard one who served God faithfully in life declare that God had forsaken him in the hour of death. But, oh, how frequent and how heart-rending are the bitter regrets that often characterise the death-bed scenes of the careless and the impenitent ! How affecting that exclamation of Cardinal Wolsey, who, after being cast aside by the monarch whom he had served so long, bitterly exclaimed,—“ If I had served my God as I have served my king, He would not have thus cast me off in mine old age !” Come, then, be decided ; lay aside your sinful prejudices, your self-justifying schemes, your vain excuses ; draw near to this holy ordinance, and dedicate yourself to the service of Him who loved you and redeemed you. Depend upon it these excuses will be of no avail in the eyes of God. We are bound by Christ’s command, and it is at once our privilege and our

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duty to obey. I repeat it, if we remain away, we sin ; if we come in an improper spirit, we sin : but, saith the Apostle, " Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." This examination, therefore shall be the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

“LET A MAN EXAMINE HIMSELF.”

Self-examination — The Object of it — Jeremy Taylor quoted — The Neglect of it — The unspeakable Importance of it shewn — Let a Man examine himself as to his Knowledge of the Ordinance — As to the Motives which bring him to the Lord's Table — As to whether he is in the State of Mind which we have shewn to be necessary — Let him examine himself by the Word of God — With Prayer for God's Spirit — The Blessings that would result from such Self-examination.

“LET a man examine himself,” saith the Apostle, “and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” Now it should be observed, that the Apostle proceeds here upon the supposition that it is our duty to come to the table of the Lord: he does not say, **“Let a man examine himself,”** that thus

he may determine whether he shall come or abstain; but he proceeds upon the supposition that it is our duty to come; and then he points out the spirit in which we should come, "Let a man examine himself." It is as much as if he had said, "Our blessed Lord, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and brake it; likewise, after supper, He took the cup, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood;" and then left a dying command to all His followers, "This do in remembrance of Me." In obedience to His command you must, therefore, eat of that bread, and drink of that cup; and, indeed, it is a blessed privilege to be permitted to do so, for the benefit is great, if, with a true, penitent heart, and lively faith, we receive that Holy Sacrament: but, upon the other hand, the danger is great if we receive the same unworthily. That you may, therefore, escape the danger and secure the benefit, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." But what! should a man, upon examination, find that he is not in a fit state to come, shall he absent himself? Nay, rather, let him repent him truly of his past sins, have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ his Saviour; let him

amend his ways, and be in "perfect charity with all men;" and then, "let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." We are not, therefore, to examine ourselves with a view to determine whether we shall come or remain away; for it is our duty to come: but we are to examine ourselves, that we may assure our hearts before God that we draw near in a becoming spirit; that we may break off our sins by repentance, humble ourselves in the sight of God, and draw near in faith to this holy ordinance.

Now, "it is remarkable," as Bishop Jeremy Taylor observes, "that in all the Scriptures of the New Testament there are no words of particular duty relating to the blessed Sacrament, and expressing the manner of our address to the mysteries, but the few words of St. Paul, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.'" The words are few, indeed, but they are very comprehensive, and if a man fully understands them, and faithfully and habitually practises them, he need never fear to "eat of that bread and drink of that cup" whenever the table is spread. "Let a man examine himself." Self-examination is, indeed, a most important duty; and it is

pressed upon our attention in the word of God, even apart from all considerations of this holy ordinance. "Examine yourselves," says the Apostle, "whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. xiii. 5); but, alas! we fear it is a much-neglected duty; men are very willing to join in all the outward acts of religion—to join in the assemblies of God's worshipping people, or to attend upon the public preaching of His word. This is all well; but, oh, to turn the current of the thoughts in upon the heart—to search and pry into the motives of actions—to make religion a matter of close, personal, heartfelt examination! This is not so pleasing; it makes discoveries from which we shrink: hence the duty itself is too often neglected; and yet it is a duty of unspeakable importance, if we would really and truly ascertain our own state in the sight of God. If we would not be judged of the Lord, we must judge ourselves. For consider here, the wheat and the tares, both grow together; here the wise and the foolish virgins are found in the same outward and visible Church; here the sheep and the goats are found in the same fold. Now how shall we ascertain to which class we belong?

A separation shall take place at the harvest ; meanwhile, it is of unspeakable importance that we should assure our hearts that we are amongst the number of those to whom Christ shall address Himself at the judgment-day,—“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” But how, it may be asked, shall we ascertain this? We answer, God has given to us in His holy word certain infallible proofs, by which we may search and try our own selves—by which we may examine and ascertain our own state in the sight of God ; but, oh, if we never try ourselves by the standard of God’s holy word—if we examine not ourselves whether we be in the faith, is it not possible that we may deceive ourselves, till the cry go forth, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh !” and then, starting from our slumber, we find that we have the lamp of religion, but no oil in our vessels? Our lamps are gone out, and while we go to buy, the bridegroom comes, the door is shut, and we are left in outer darkness, to cry, but cry in vain, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” How important, then, the duty, “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.”

But if the duty of self-examination be thus necessary at all times, surely it is so in a peculiar manner when we draw near to meet our God in the solemn and sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper. With what searchings of heart should we search and examine ourselves, before we presume to "eat of that bread, and drink of that cup!" "For as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament; so is the danger great if we receive the same unworthily." But how shall we ascertain as to whether we draw near in a becoming spirit, if we do not examine ourselves? And then, again, if we look to the spirit in which many come, we shall see how needful it is that we should look the more closely to ourselves; for while it is true upon the one hand that many live in entire neglect of this ordinance, it is equally true upon the other hand that many come in an unbecoming spirit: some, it may be, for mere fashion sake; some, because they think it looks respectable; others, because they think it becoming in persons of their station, because others do so, or from various reasons of a similar nature. Thus, whether we look to

the nature of the ordinance itself—so solemn, so sacred; to the spirit in which we should come—a spirit of repentance and faith, with a steadfast purpose to amend our ways, a thankful remembrance of Christ's death, and charity with all men ;—whether we look to this, or to the benefits upon the one hand, or the danger upon the other, we shall see how needful the exhortation of the Apostle,—“ Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

“ Let a man examine himself,” then, as to the *knowledge* that he possesses of the nature and design of this ordinance. In obedience to Christ's command, “ this do:” we are required to come ; but then we should come not ignorantly, or superstitiously, but with, at least, some correct views of the nature and design of the ordinance. It is, indeed, quite in vain that we come to the table of the Lord, if we come in a spirit so ignorant as to have no distinct views (or no views at all, it may be) of the nature and design of the ordinance ; accordingly we have endeavoured, in the commencement of this little treatise upon the subject, to explain and open to the mind of the reader, as clearly and as concisely as we

could, the nature and design of this solemn and sacred ordinance. We feel it, indeed, to be the more necessary to insist upon this, because we believe, generally speaking, there is much ignorance prevailing upon the subject. Some, borrowing it may be their notions upon the subject from the more ignorant and superstitious members of the Church of Rome, look upon this ordinance in the light of a charm, from which they expect to receive some benefits; but if you ask them as to the nature of the benefits they expect to receive, how or why they expect them, alas you find, that if they have any distinct notions upon the subject, they are for the most part very incorrect. Others, again, look upon this ordinance in a spirit of ignorant and superstitious dread; they have some indistinct notions, it may be, of the nature of these "holy mysteries;" they have heard of the great danger of eating and drinking unworthily; hence they are filled with superstitious fears and doubts: but beyond this all is cloudy ignorance and darkness. Others, it may be, borrowing their notions from an opposite and extreme party, have conceived views so low of the nature of this sacred ordinance, that they draw near in a spirit of

much irreverence, as if almost to partake of a common repast. But if you, my Christian reader, would come in a proper and profitable spirit, you must come in an enlightened spirit; I mean you must have, at least, some distinct notions of the true nature of the ordinance,—that it was instituted in remembrance of Christ, and that it is a blessed means of grace, whereby we feed upon Him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving, and are thus strengthened and refreshed in our souls. But if you ask me, From what source must we draw our knowledge of the subject? I answer at once, From the word of God. This is that true and heavenly record that contains all things necessary to salvation,—enough to guide our feet into the way of peace,—enough to instruct and to enlighten us upon this and upon every other spiritual subject,—enough to

“ Guide us all our journey through,
Till we behold the clearer light
Of an eternal day.”

But if you ask me again, for some safe and scriptural treatise, in which the subject is concisely, and yet fully, explained, I answer, that I know of none equal to the Communion

Service of our Church; and I am quite free to confess, that in almost every view that I have taken of the subject in this little treatise, I have drawn more or less from the Communion Service of our own Church; and if a man will faithfully and prayerfully study this, he can never be ignorant on the subject. But if there still be any doubt upon the mind, let him, in accordance with the advice as given in that Service, go to his minister, explain his doubts, and ask for the benefit of his counsel and advice. Thus let a man examine himself as to the knowledge that he possesses of this holy ordinance.

Let a man examine himself as *to the motives which bring him to the table of the Lord*. This is the more necessary, because, as we observed before, many come from improper motives,—some to commend or to recommend themselves to the favourable notice of others, or because, from a self-righteous feeling, they think they are performing a meritorious act, which must, as its just return, secure to them the favour of God. But oh, my Christian reader, these are not the motives which must draw thee to the table of the Lord; you must come moved by a feeling of reverential obedience to His command,

attracted by His love, drawn by His invitation, with a simple desire to be a partaker of the spiritual benefits of this ordinance; to remember your Saviour, to shew forth His death, to feed upon Him in your heart by faith, and thus to glorify His holy name. These are the motives which must draw you to the table of thy Saviour,—motives not earthly, but heavenly,—not temporal, but spiritual,—not seeking the praise of man, but the praise of God. But as men are ever apt to come from improper motives, to be drawn by mere considerations of a temporal nature, so is it the more necessary that a man should carefully and prayerfully examine himself as to the motives which bring him to this holy table.

Then, again, let a man examine himself as *to the spirit* in which he comes to this holy ordinance; as to whether, in fact, he is possessed of those necessary graces which will fit him to be a meet partaker of these holy mysteries. What these graces are we learn from our Church Catechism, and we have enlarged upon and shewn the necessity of them in a previous part of this treatise. But it is necessary that a man should not merely *know* that these graces are required of them that come to the table of the Lord, but

that he should *examine himself*, closely and prayerfully examine himself, as to whether *he possesses* them in a *real, true, and saving* manner. He should examine himself upon the subject of his repentance, as to whether he *truly* repents of his former sins. There is a repentance that needs to be repented of; there is the sorrow of the world that worketh death. It is said of Judas, that he "repented himself;" but, then, this was not a true repentance, for it did not lead him to forsake sin, but to commit sin: "he went and hanged himself." There is, again, a repentance, or a sorrow, for past sin, arising from mere considerations of the shame or loss which the man sustains in his character or reputation by its discovery, or of the injury he finds he has done to himself in health or fortune, or even from a dread of that punishment which he fears may be its consequence either here or hereafter. Now this is all well as far as it goes; still it is no more than every man will naturally feel who at all reflects upon the subject; nay, we doubt not but that, in a certain sense, the devil himself experiences this kind of repentance: but, then, it is a repentance which is wrung from him by the present pressure of the torments of

hell. But true repentance, such as is required of those that come to the table of the Lord, is different in this respect from that which we have mentioned above, in that it looks not merely to the discovery of sin, or to the punishment of sin here or hereafter, but it looks to the *sin itself*; and, regarding it in the light of an insult and injury to the glorious God of heaven,—looking upon it as that accursed thing which crucified the Lord of glory, the penitent sinner mourns over sin as such, even apart from all considerations of its discovery or of its punishment. The language of true repentance is that of David, — “Against Thee, Thee only, have sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” It is necessary, then, that a man should carefully examine himself as to whether he truly repents of his past sins, as to whether it be a true or a spurious repentance, as to whether it be the sorrow of the world or a godly sorrow, as to whether his repentance looks beyond the discovery and the consequences of sin to the sin itself; for then, and then only, can a man be said to “repent him truly of his past sins” when he mourns over sin as an offence against God. And then let a man examine himself as to whether he steadfastly purposes to lead a

life in conformity with the will and word of God : how necessary this is in those who come to this holy Sacrament, I have shewn in a previous chapter. But a man must not merely know that this is necessary, he must search and examine his own heart—that heart which is “deceitful above all things ;” he must examine himself closely and prayerfully as to whether he himself has formed the steadfast purpose to amend his ways ; he must examine as to whether it be a *steadfast* purpose—a purpose which will lead him to stand fast in the hour of trial. Hell itself, it has been said, is paved with good resolutions—resolutions that were easily formed, and as quickly broken—formed without counting the cost. A man, therefore, must examine himself as to the nature of his purpose, whether it be a steadfast purpose. Let him sit down and count the cost ; let him reflect over the sins that so easily beset him—those sins that are dear to him, it may be, as a right hand or a right eye ; and then let him ask himself, as in the sight of God, whether he is fully and steadfastly prepared to “rise up, leave all, and follow Christ ;” and then let him see to it that this steadfast purpose is formed not in his own strength, but in humble reliance

upon the strength of Him who has promised, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" and let him close the whole by calling upon God, and saying,—

"The dearest idol I have known,
 Whate'er that idol be,
 Help me to tear it from thy throne,
 And worship only thee."

"Let a man examine himself;" let him examine himself as to whether he has a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, a thankful remembrance of His death, and as to whether he is in charity with all men. Upon these, and various other subjects of a similar nature, it is very meet, right, and his bounden duty, that a man should examine himself; he should examine himself upon the subject of his feelings toward God. Does he love God? Is he cold? is he hot? is he lukewarm? is he indifferent? or what is the state of the affections of his soul toward God? But, again, let him try these feelings by his actions; let him examine himself. Is he fervent in prayer? prayer in private, in public, in the family? does he love the house of God? the people of God? the word of God? what is the constant tenor of his conversation? is he humble in his spirit?

is he forbearing and forgiving in his disposition? does he forgive others as he hopes to be forgiven? Thus, "let a man examine himself." And then, does he find, upon examination, that he is living in the indulgence of some secret sin? let him forsake his sin. Does he find that he is backsliding in the ways of religion? "let him remember from whence he is fallen, and repent and do the first works." Is he indifferent? let him remember that "the flesh is weak," and, therefore, let him "watch and pray, that he enter not into temptation;" let him meditate over the sorrows and the sufferings of Jesus. Is he progressing? let him thank God and take courage. Oh, "let a man examine himself."

But let him see to it that this examination is conducted upon scriptural principles; let him compare himself, not, as is too often the case, by the low and false standard of his fellow-creatures around; "they," says the Apostle, "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." Oh, let him bring himself at once to the only true and perfect standard—the unerring truth of God: let him try himself by this, measuring himself by its principles, proving himself by its

precepts. But, oh, let this examination be conducted in the spirit of humble and of earnest prayer ; let him cry out with David,—“ Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts, see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Let him ask for the outpouring of the Spirit of God to convince him of sin and to convince him of righteousness, to enlighten his darkness, to quicken his conscience, and to sanctify his soul ; and thus let a man carefully, habitually, and prayerfully “ examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

Oh, if this duty of self-examination were habitually and constantly practised, in the spirit to which we have alluded,—if men would humbly and earnestly, and in the spirit of prayer, try and examine themselves by the standard of God’s holy word,—if they would do this, not merely upon set occasions, but habitually and constantly, confessing their sins as they detect them, and endeavouring to guard against them for the future ; how great the benefits and the blessings which we might expect as the happy result ! Thus it is that a man should become more and

more acquainted with the state of his own deceitful heart, that he would detect and find out his secret sins—those sins which so easily beset him, that conscience itself would become more quickened, and that an earnest spirit of humble watchfulness and of prayer should be promoted ; and thus might he expect to be more and more delivered from the power of his prevailing sins, to grow in grace, and in heavenly knowledge ; and so, whenever the table of the Lord was spread, he should have nothing to do but gird up the loins of his mind, draw near in faith, and be a meet and happy partaker of those holy mysteries. Oh, “let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE FAITHFUL
COMMUNICANT.

Special Seasons in which the faithful Communicant will find a peculiar blessing in this Ordinance—An aged Christian — How we should conduct ourselves after receiving the Holy Communion — The fall of all the Disciples, on the very night in which they received it, a warning to us—Their being received back again, an encouragement — Conclusion.

BUT now let us advance to consider, What are the benefits and blessings of which the faithful communicant may expect to be a partaker in the use of this Holy Eucharist? It will not be necessary that we dwell long upon this, because, in considering the nature and design of this holy ordinance, we have

been led in a great measure to anticipate this part of the subject. We may observe then generally, that the benefits of which we may expect to be partakers are the increasing and the strengthening *of those graces which we bring with us to the table of the Lord*. This ordinance is not for the purpose of communicating new graces to the soul, but it is intended for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls in the exercise of those graces which we already possess. This ordinance is not for the dead, but for the living ; it is not for those who are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, but for those who have already been made alive unto God. It is not for the purpose of imparting a new and spiritual life to the soul, but for the purpose of communicating food and refreshment to the spiritual life which we already possess. If we come without life, we depart without life ; if we come without faith, we depart without faith ; but when with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive this holy Sacrament, then, indeed, are the benefits great : for then, hungering and thirsting in our souls after righteousness, we here, spiritually, eat the flesh of Christ, and

drink his blood ; and our souls are thus sustained, strengthened, and refreshed by the “ body and blood of Christ ”—its spiritual and proper food, just as our bodies are by the bread and wine—its natural and proper aliment.

There are two parts in a Sacrament : the outward part or sign, and the inward part, or thing signified. In the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the outward part, or sign, is bread and wine. *The body*, and the body alone, partakes of that, and receives its nourishment. The inward part, or thing signified, is “ the body and blood of Christ.” The *soul*, and the soul alone, partakes of that, and receives its proper nourishment. But in order that the body should receive nourishment from the bread and wine, it must be a living body. So, in order that the soul should receive nourishment from the body and blood of Christ, it must be a living soul—it must be a soul which has been made alive unto God, which has been quickened by the energy of the life-giving Spirit of God ; and then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood ; we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us ; we dwell in Him by faith, and He dwells in us by His

Spirit; we dwell in Him, as our surety, our substitute, our hope, our all; we dwell in Him as the man-slayer, after having escaped the avenger of blood, dwelt in the city of refuge until the death of the high-priest; we dwell in Christ as Noah's dove dwelt in the ark until the waters were abated: so the believer dwells in Christ, and Christ dwells in him by His Spirit; according as it is written,—“ I will dwell in them and walk in them; ” or, according to the saying of Christ Himself, “ If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him; ” yea, we are one with Christ, and Christ is one with us. This is a great mystery; we cannot fully comprehend its spiritual import: but this we know, we are one with Him, as the branches are united to the vine; we are one with Him, as the members of the body are united to the head—one in principle, one in heart, one in hope: we look to one heaven, one home. “ It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ” Oh, how great the benefits

of waiting upon the Lord in the use of this holy means of grace ; all spiritual graces grow within us, faith is confirmed, love inflamed, hope animated, heavenly-mindedness is promoted. Here the weak are strengthened, the wavering confirmed, the feeble knees are made strong, mourners are comforted, the hungry are fed, the thirsty have drink ; and all the believing members of the Church of Christ cemented, knit in one, are edified and built up in their most holy faith. United to one glorious Saviour, sanctified by one blessed Spirit, partakers of one bread, they have one heart, one heaven, one hope ; and all are strengthened and refreshed as they go upon their journey homeward ;

“ Marching through Emmanuel’s land,
To fairer worlds on high.”

Such are the benefits of which we may expect to be partakers, in the faithful use of this Holy Sacrament. It is a fountain opened up in the midst of the vallies ; and here the way-worn pilgrim loves to meet his Saviour, as of old He sits by the well, and to draw out of His fulness “ grace for grace.” How blessed the privilege, then, to be permitted, at all

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times, to draw near in faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to our comfort!

But there are *special seasons* in which the Christian pilgrim will find a peculiar blessing in the sacred ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Thus, in seasons of peculiar difficulty and of trial, when all around him seem to have forsaken the service of God—when his lot is cast in a spiritual wilderness, and he is ready to cry out with the prophet, “I am left alone,”—when there is no kindred spirit near with whom he can take sweet counsel,—when those who before smiled upon him, now pass by with a cold or disdainful look,—when friends all fail, and foes all unite,—when he is persecuted for righteousness' sake, and his own familiar friend becomes his foe,—then, oh, then how dear to him are the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts! how blessed the privilege to draw near to the table of the Lord! So calm, so solemn, so sacred, all around is peace, he feels that this is none other than the house of God, and this the gate of heaven. Jesus is present; He breathes upon him and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” He medi-

tates upon His sufferings ; he remembers how He was wounded and bruised, how He was buffeted and spit upon, and yet how calm, how collected, "like a lamb dumb before his shearer ;" "when He was reviled, He reviled not again" — he meditates upon this. He feeds upon Him in his heart by faith, with thanksgiving ; and is refreshed and strengthened. And now he goes forth again animated by the love, and breathing the Spirit, of Jesus, and is prepared to "bless them that curse, and to pray for those that despitefully use him." So it was with the blessed martyrs of old. When great persecution was raised against the Churches, and the exterminating sword was unsheathed, and many were called upon to glorify God in the fires ; oh, in those early days of pure Christianity, how many noble spirits, upon the eve of their death, knelt devoutly at the table of their Lord, and experienced comfort, peace, and support ! and then, like Stephen, prayed for their murderers, witnessed a good confession at the burning fagot and the stake ; and then (praises in their hearts and peace in their souls) ascended upon their triumphant chariots of fire, to join "the spirits of just men made perfect."

In seasons, too, of spiritual trial and temptation, when Satan desires to have the Christian, that he may sift him as wheat,—when family cares and worldly business press upon the mind,—when the flesh solicits, or the world harasses, or the devil tempts,—when, like Martha, he is “careful and troubled about many things,” and is tempted to neglect “the one thing needful,”—when earth gains upon him, and heaven seems to retire from his view,—when temporal cares increase, and spiritual graces seem to decline within him,—then, oh, then how blessed the privilege to be permitted to draw near to this sacred ordinance, and refresh himself when he is weary! Here he meets his Saviour. He remembers that He “suffered being tempted, and is able to succour them that are tempted.” Jesus stands by him,—“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see;” “Will ye also go away?” “My grace is sufficient for thee;” “Be not faithless, but believing.” “My Lord and my God!” he responds, with Thomas. And now he devoutly kneels by His table; he feeds upon Him in his heart by faith, with thanksgiving; he is strengthened, refreshed, and animated. The sufferings of Jesus, and the glory that

shall be revealed, burst at once upon his view. Like Mary the mother of Jesus, and the other women, he sits by the cross. The ambitions of the world droop before it; the stimulus of sinful passion loses its force, rebuked before it; the cloud of cares is dispersed, heaven opens to his view, and earth retires. And now he goes forth again upon the world; his face shines like the face of Moses as he came down from the mount; he is in the world, but not of it; he uses the world, but he abuses it not; he is enabled to say, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." He casts all his care upon Him, and goes on his way, "as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing."

Oh! how many a weary, wayworn, tempted pilgrim has found it good for him to be here! Thus it was with David of old. His feet were almost gone, his steps had well-nigh slipped, he was envious at the foolish when he saw the prosperity of the wicked; and all this was too hard for him, until he *went into the sanctuary*

of God ; and then the psalm that opens in a style so desponding closes in the happy and triumphant strains,—“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” (Psalm lxxiii.)

In times, too, of sorrow, or of deep distress, when the Christian is called to mourn over the loss of some one that was near and dear, to shed the tear of sorrow over the grave of some beloved friend, when, like David, he exclaims,—“I shall go to him but he shall not return to me,” then, oh, then how blessed the privilege to wait upon the Lord in the use of this sacred ordinance! Jesus Himself stands by him as He stood by the weeping Mary. His language is, “Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?” “Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope: for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” The trumpet shall sound; “the dead in Christ shall rise first; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” With Job he exclaims, “Naked came I

out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither ; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Or again, when, in the season of youth, we are called upon to ratify and confirm our baptismal covenant, or when, upon any other occasion, we are desirous of dedicating ourselves unreservedly to the service of God, it is very meet and right upon such an occasion that we should present ourselves unto the Lord in the use of this His own ordinance, a sacrifice to His service, body, soul, and spirit. Thus it is that the mind will be filled with a train of solemn and of sacred feeling ; that we may expect to experience the presence and the blessing of God, and that His grace and strength will go with us to enable us to perform our vows.

Or, again, when we are about to go forth from our family circle, to enter upon a new sphere of duty, to form new connexions and new engagements, and thus to leave ; it may be for the first time, the happy home of our parents, it is most desirable upon such an occasion that, as we enter upon those new engagements, we should solemnly present ourselves to the service of God, and ask for His

guidance and grace. Our prayer upon such an occasion should be that of Jabez,—“Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil.” (1 Chron. iv. 10.) But where, or how, shall we better do this, than at the table of the Lord? Therefore is it that our Church, in the form of the Solemnization of Matrimony, observes, that “it is convenient that the new-married persons should receive the holy Communion at the time of their marriage, or at the first opportunity after their marriage.” So it is that they shall enter upon this interesting and honourable estate—(which was instituted of God in the time of man’s innocency, and which signifies unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church—a holy estate, which Christ adorned and beautified with His presence and first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee),—so it is that they shall enter upon this estate in a proper spirit and in a becoming frame of mind; and thus may they expect that God will bless them indeed, and enlarge their coast, and that His hand will be with them to keep them from evil.

Or, again, when the Christian has received a blessing from God—when, like Jacob, he has been brought again in peace to his father's house—when God has prospered the work of his hands, and crowned his labours with success—or when he has experienced some signal deliverance, been preserved from danger, or raised from a bed of sickness and restored again to health—it is very meet, right, and his bounden duty, upon such an occasion, that he should offer to God his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving in the use of this Holy Eucharist. Therefore is it that our Church observes, after the service for the Churching of Women, that “it is convenient she should receive the holy Communion.”

But the time would fail me to tell of all the special seasons in which the Christian shall experience a peculiar blessing in this ordinance. In times of sunshine and times of storm, in times of sickness and times of health, in times of prosperity and times of adversity,—indeed at all times, and in all places, it is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should give thanks unto Almighty God, evermore praising Him for His mercies, meditating upon His love, dwelling in thought upon the

wondrous scenes of our Saviour's suffering, and feeding upon Him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving. Oh, happy, happy is the man that thus humbly waits upon the Lord in the faithful use of this sacred means of grace! The blessing of the Lord shall be upon him when he goeth out and when he cometh in, when he riseth up and when he lieth down; he goes from strength to strength, from grace to grace; he is on his journey home, he is on his way to God; he comes up from the wilderness "leaning on his Beloved," peace in his heart, and holiness in his life. The Lord God is to him "a sun and shield;" He "will give grace and glory" too. Storms may gather, clouds may lower, tempests may burst, the tree may be shaken, but not uprooted; it is "a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord." He is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

All seasons point to Jesus. Around him, as the Sun of Righteousness, the Christian moves in the glorious cycle of the spiritual year. He shines under His light, he lives in His love, he walks by His Spirit. The season of Advent

comes round ; it points to the birth of Jesus. And now, with the shepherds who kept watch over their flocks by night upon the fields of Bethlehem, he listens to the gladdening announcement of the angel that heralds in the birth of Emmanuel,—“Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” With the multitude of the heavenly host that chant the morning anthem of His birth, he catches the strains of heavenly music that fall from their harps ; and with them he joins in spirit in that noble song of praise, “Glory to God in the highest ! on earth peace, good-will toward men.”

And now he is conducted to the commemoration of His death. With Joseph of Arimathea, he goes down to the tomb ; a great stone is rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre. But hark !

“ The happy morn is come,
Triumphant o’er the grave !”

The seal is burst ! the stone is rolled back !
the sepulchre is empty !

“ Captivity is captive led,
Since Jesus liveth that was dead !”

“ He is not here,” cries an angel ; “ He is

risen." "The Lord is risen indeed!" His heart responds,—“O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And now he looks to His ascension. He dwells upon His mediatorial work; he anticipates the glories of His second coming, “knowing that when Christ, who is his life, shall appear, then shall he also appear with Him in glory.”

Here, then, is the path of the Christian pilgrim, from Bethlehem to Calvary, from Calvary to Zion. The cradle, it conducts to the cross; the cross, it points to the crown. Meanwhile, as the journey is great, he feeds upon that spiritual sustenance which God has graciously provided; he feeds upon Christ, who is the bread of life, in his heart, by faith, with thanksgiving; he is strengthened and refreshed. With joy he draws water out of the wells of salvation, and goes on his way rejoicing. Oh “how blest are they that thus fear the Lord from youth to age! Fair as morn, bright as noon, and mild as dewy eve, they sink at length to calm repose, with rich, not dazzling lustre, tinging and gilding all around. So have I seen in lowly life an aged man, who

served the Lord for sixty years ; his person was neat, his figure erect, his manner cheerful ; his life was useful, his conversation instructive, and his experience large. When near his end he was asked, Had he any doubts ? ‘ Doubts ! ’ he repeated ; ‘ how can I have doubts ? I have the eternal promise.’ ‘ Have you any darkness ? ’ ‘ How can I have darkness ? I dwell in the sunshine of His glorious countenance.’ ‘ Are you afraid to die ? ’ ‘ Afraid to die ! No ! death will be my birthday in the palace of glory.’ His faith in Christ was strong, his hope through Christ was lively ; he had Christ in all things, and all things in Christ : thus his life was holy, and his death was happy. Youth and age, friend and neighbour, even many of adverse faith, crowded round his humble grave, to do homage to departed worth. All were solemn, and all were still ; no sound was heard but the voice of the man of God. ‘ Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.’ ” *

Thus, have we been privileged to enter into the upper chamber, to sit down with Jesus and His disciples, and there to dwell in thought upon the import of this solemn and sacred or-

* Rev. John Gregg, Dublin.

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dinance. We have thus considered the nature and design of the ordinance. We have seen the obligations we are under to communicate, and the spirit in which we should do so; we have endeavoured to answer and remove some objections; we have shewn how necessary it is that a man should examine himself before he presume to eat of that bread and drink of that cup; and, finally, we have dwelt upon the benefits and blessings of which we may expect to be partakers in the faithful use of this holy ordinance. I trust, my Christian reader, that you have felt, with Peter upon the holy mount, that it was good for you to be here.

And now, let us look to the conclusion of the whole matter. How did our Lord bring this interesting ceremony to a close? The Evangelist relates, "they sung an hymn;" an hymn, doubtless, of praise to God, as the Jews were accustomed to conclude the paschal supper by the singing of psalms. So our Church, ever following in the steps of her Saviour, concludes her Communion Service with the following beautiful hymn,—“Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee,

we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly king, God the Father Almighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son Jesu Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us. For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father."

But now we must come down from the upper chamber, we must go forth again to engage in the necessary occupations of the world. But oh, let us come down with Jesus; "our profession is to follow Christ, and to be made like unto Him:" let us keep close, then, by Him. Where did Christ go when He first came down from the upper chamber? The Evangelist relates, "they went out into the Mount of Olives." Our blessed Lord was frequently in the habit of retiring to a mountain, or to a desert place, for the purpose of

meditation and prayer ; and doubtless upon this occasion He went forth into the Mount of Olives, that there He might meditate and pray. So the communicant, after having partaken of the Supper of the Lord, should also retire, for the purpose of meditation and prayer. What the subject of his meditations should be the Mount of Olives itself will suggest. In this mountain, or connected with it, there was a garden—'tis the Garden of Gethsemane. Here it was that the Saviour of mankind was betrayed ; here it was that, being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly, that, if it were possible, that cup might pass from Him,—that His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground,—and that, in the depth of His suffering, He exclaimed, “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” Let the Garden, then, of Gethsemane suggest the solemn subject of his meditations. Let him meditate over the passion, the sufferings, and the death of Jesus ; and let him remember that all this was endured for him.

But again, the mountain to which Jesus retired on this occasion was also the mount from which He ascended up on high. Let the mountain, then, again suggest the subject of his me-

ditations ; let him meditate upon the ascension of Christ ; let him follow Him in thought as He ascended up on high, until a cloud received Him out of the sight of the disciples ; let him dwell upon His continued intercession for us at the right hand of God ; upon the glories of His mediatorial reign ; and let him remember that “ this same Jesus, which was taken up into heaven, shall so come in like manner as He was seen to go into heaven.”

But, oh, while thus he meditates, let him watch and pray that he enter not into temptation. The spirit truly may be willing, but the flesh is weak. The wicked one is in the garden desiring to have him, that he may sift him as wheat. Oh, therefore let him watch and pray. Perhaps we are never more exposed to danger than immediately after we have received some signal manifestation of the Divine approval. We are apt to be thrown off our guard, to forget our liability to temptation, or even to be elated by spiritual pride, and thus it is that Satan gets the advantage over us. So it was upon the present occasion. It is, indeed, most remarkable, that of the twelve disciples who sat down with Jesus upon this occasion, upon that very night one betrayed him, another de-

nied him, and all forsook him and fled ; and there was also, as St. Luke informs us, a strife among them which of them should be accounted the greatest (Luke xxii. 24). Let this, therefore, be a solemn warning to us, that we watch and pray upon such occasions that we enter not into temptation, for we are not ignorant of his devices.

But should the Christian be thrown off his guard, should Satan get an advantage over him, should he be tempted to deny or to forsake his Saviour, let him not, therefore, despair, as if there were no forgiveness for him. No ! this notion that there is no pardon for sin committed after the receiving of the holy Communion has no support from Holy Scripture. It is a device of the wicked one, by which he would cast down the Christian, “ either into desperation or into wretchlessness of unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.” No ! it has no support from Holy Scripture ; it is overthrown by the evidence of the case before us. The apostles all fell upon the very night on which they received the holy Communion. The apostles (Judas Iscariot, who was the traitor, and had a devil, alone excepted) were all received back again upon the very day in

which the Saviour rose from the grave as a triumphant conqueror over the powers of death and hell. Yes, "very early in the morning, the first day of the week, cometh Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Salome, unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun; and entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and they were affrighted: but he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified; He is risen, He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him." And he sends the following message to the disciples,—it is a message of mercy from Jesus,—“Go your way, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he goeth before you into Galilee.” All the disciples had forsaken Him in the hour of His sorrow, and now, in the hour of His triumph, when He is “declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead,” there is a message of mercy sent to all to meet Him in Galilee! Peter had fallen the deepest; Peter had not only forsaken Him, but denied Him; and the name of Peter is especially inserted in the message,—“Tell his disciples *and Peter*.” It was as much as to say, Let Peter, too, ac-

company the disciples ; let not Peter despair : Peter's sin has been great, but Peter's forgiveness is great too. Nor was this all. For "as they went to tell His disciples, behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail !" And then He, too, sends the following gracious message to those disciples who had so basely forsaken him—mark the terms of it,—“Go tell my *brethren* that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.” “*My brethren!*” Now this was a term of endearment, which our blessed Lord had never condescended to use toward His disciples before : He had called them apostles before ; He had called them His friends ; but He never yet had called them His *brethren* before. He uses a term of condescending endearment toward them, by which He would assure them that their iniquity is pardoned, that their sin is forgiven, that their offences are not merely forgiven, but forgotten too ; and that they are received again into His favour and love.

The disciples fell upon the very night in which they had received the Supper of the Lord from the hands of Jesus. Let the Christian communicant then watch and pray that he enter not into temptation.

The disciples were received back upon the resurrection morn. Let not the Christian communicant therefore despair should he fall into sin. No, let him with Peter go out and weep bitterly for his sin, and with Peter too he shall receive the gracious assurance of pardoning mercy.

Yes, yes ; it was to the very disciples who denied Him and forsook Him in the hour of His deepest sorrow, that now, in the morn of His triumphant resurrection, He sends the message, "Go tell my brethren." It was after their fall that "He breathed upon them, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." It was after their fall that He led them out as far as to Bethany, lifted up His hands and blessed them. It was after their fall that He gave to them the glorious commission, "Go ye into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature." It was after this that they saw Him ascend as the King of Glory, until a cloud received Him out of their sight. It was after this that "they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." And when this same Jesus which was taken up from them into heaven shall so come in like

manner as they saw Him go into heaven—when He who once came to visit us in great humility shall come again in the last day, in His glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and dead—when the trumpet sounds, and earth, and sea, and death, and hell give forth their dead—when the great white throne is fixed, and the judgment is set, and the books are opened, then, oh then, those same disciples shall also “sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” And when, O Lord,

“Thou mak’st thy jewels up,
And set’st thy starry crown;
When all thy precious gems shall shine,
Proclaimed by thee thine own;
May we, a little band of love,
Be sinners saved by grace;
From glory into glory changed,
Behold thee face to face.”

And now, my Christian reader, I have done. What further remains but that I commend this little volume to the blessing of Almighty God? Without His blessing nothing is strong, nothing is holy; and His blessing can prosper even this which I have attempted. I send it forth, then, in the Name of the Great

Head of the Church. Command, O Lord, Thy blessing; "and the glorious majesty of the Lord our God be upon us: prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us, O prosper Thou our handy-work." And "now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

THE END.

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